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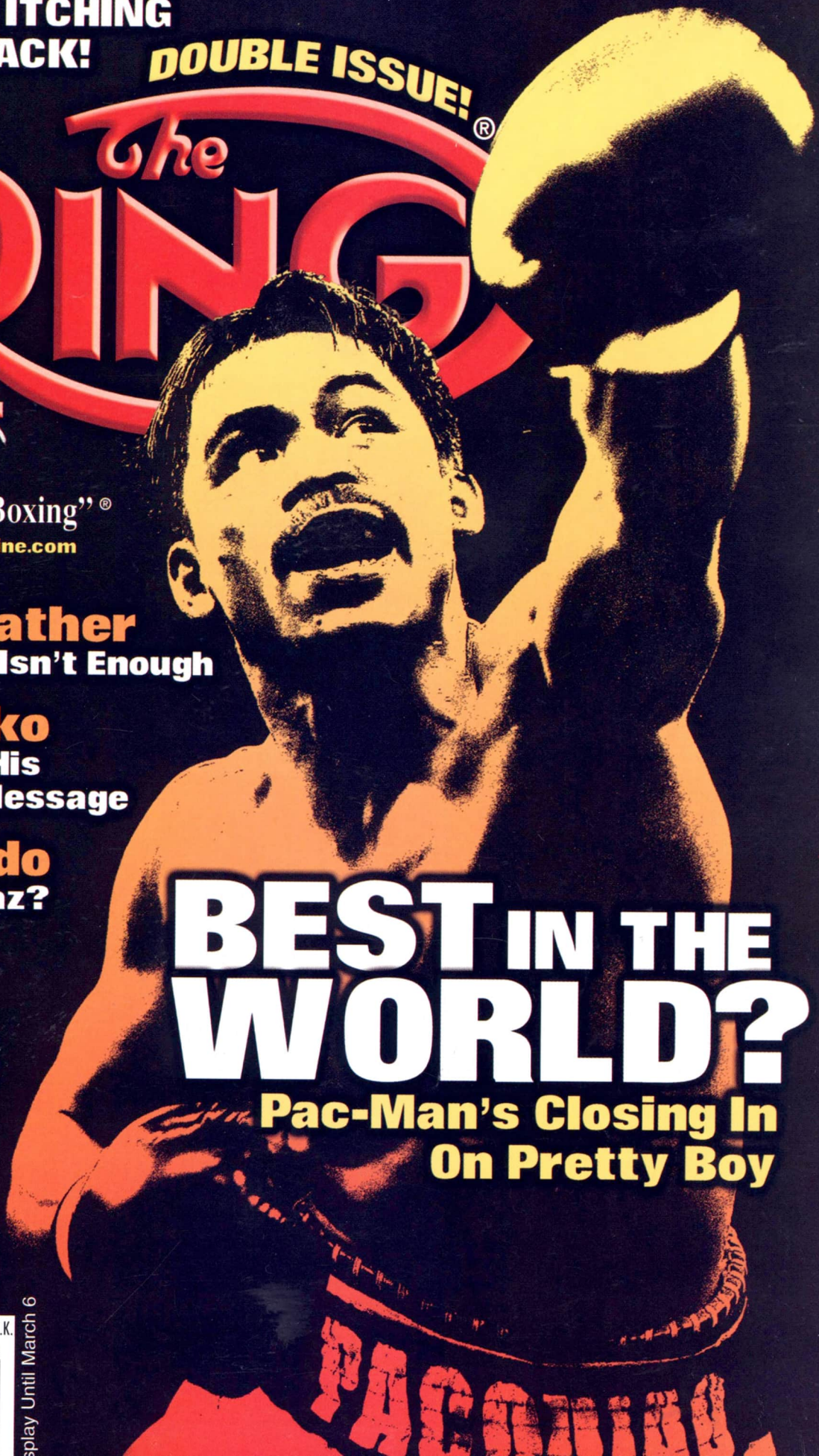

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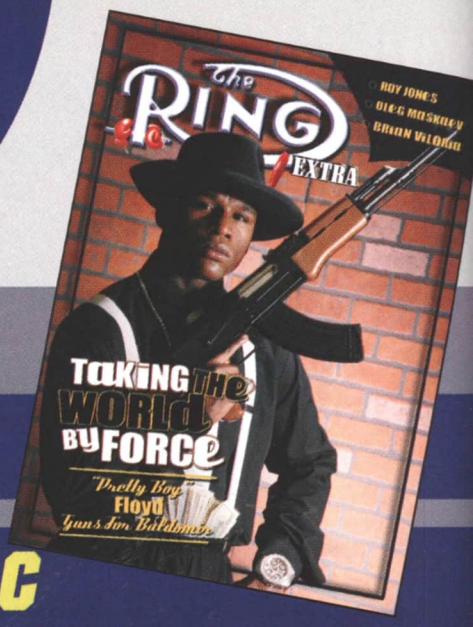

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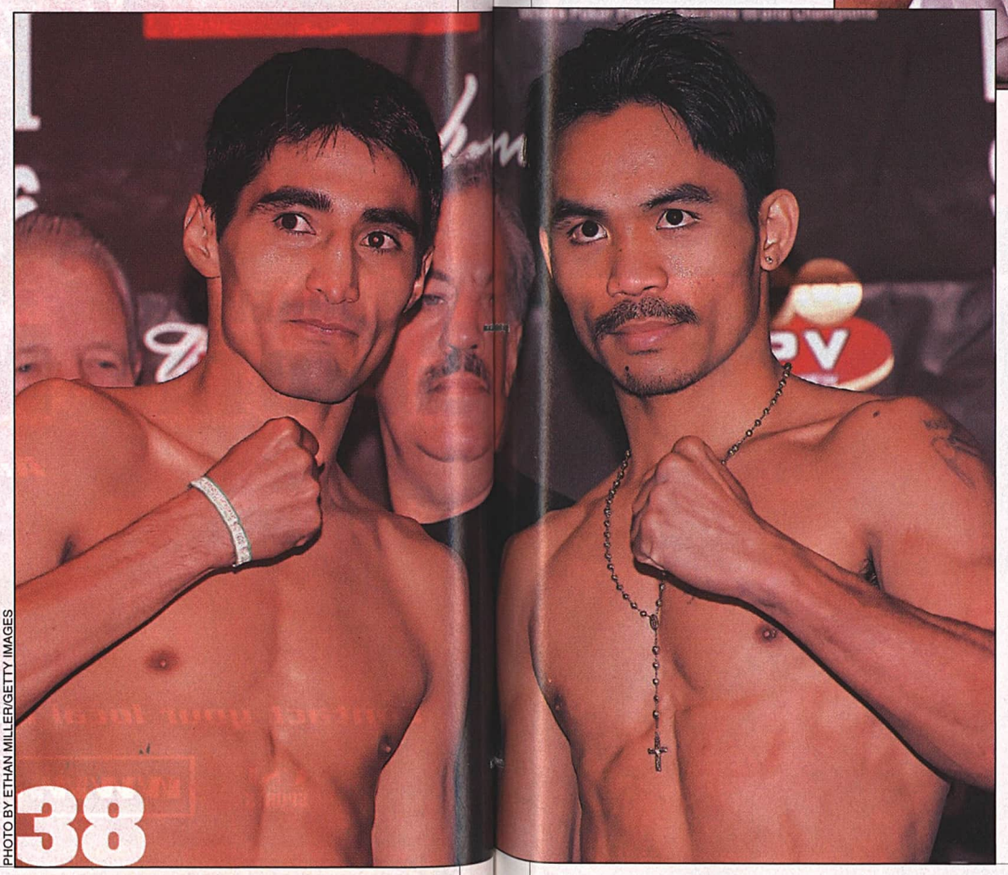

PHOTO BY ETHAN MILLER/GETTY IMAGES

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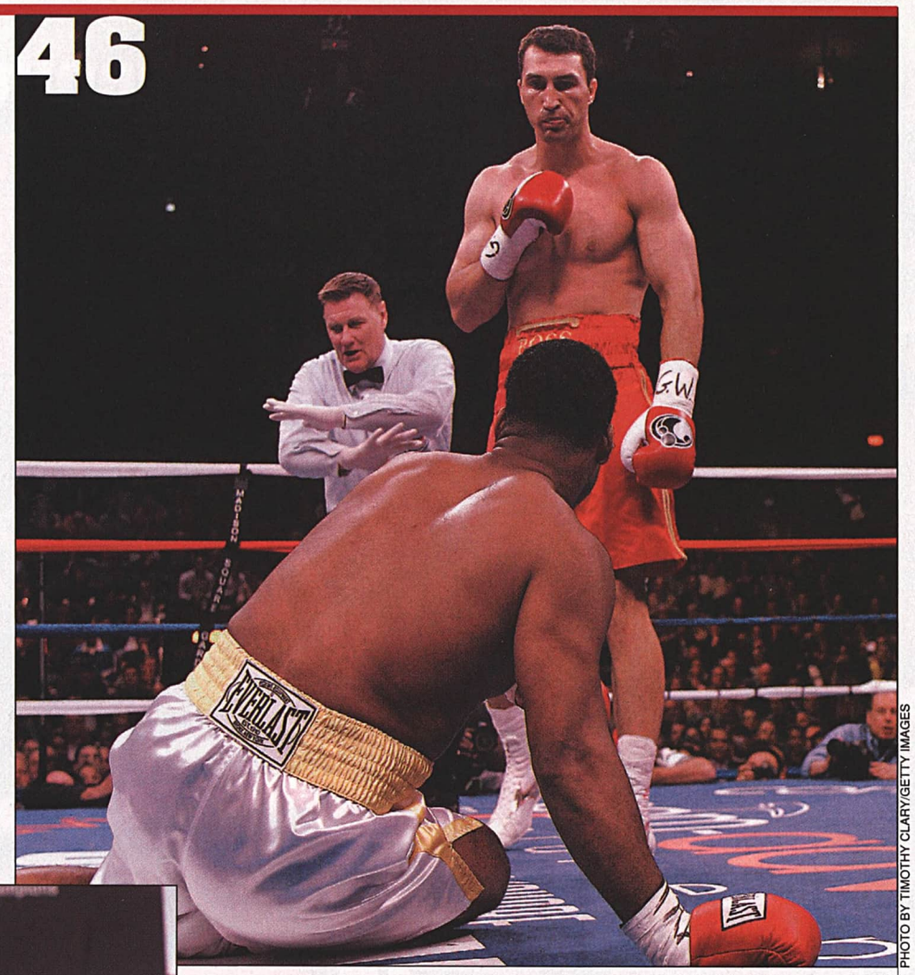

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Opening Shot

"Yerrr Out ... Well, Not Exactly, But Yerrr Not Exactly Safe Either!"

Erik Morales is not auditioning for a second career as a pinch runner for Potros de Tijuana. He's just gone down for the second of three times at the hands of the Philippines' designated hitter, Manny Pacquaio, at what would be a three-rounder at the Thomas & Mack Center in Las Vegas. Morales may not be in the market for a new job just yet, but it's a fair assumption he won't be fighting Pac-Man a fourth time.

PHOTO BY JED JACOBSOHN/GETTY IMAGES

Volume 85, No. 2 March 2006

The RING

I've never been a major fan of the pound-for-pound ratings; they're fun but so subjective that they amount to little more than somebody's opinion. And we all know the old joke about opinions.

Nonetheless, as alphabet titles spread like a flesh-eating virus in the 1980s and '90s and the term "world champion" became virtually meaningless, fans and fighters alike gravitated toward pound-for-pound status in search of an indicator of pugilistic excellence. While THE RING's Championship Policy has made significant inroads toward restoring credibility to championship boxing, the fact remains that for a handful of top fighters and many fans, pound-for-pound ranking remains an important benchmark of excellence—not to mention a topic of heated debate.

In this issue, there are feature articles on the fighters ranked number one (Floyd Mayweather) and number two (Manny Pacquiao) in THE RING's current pound-for-pound ratings. And although they are unquestionably two of the sport's finest practitioners, when it comes to providing entertainment, "Pac-Man" is so far ahead of "Pretty Boy," they're not even in the same league. For me, this skews things in an uncomfortable way: If the best fighter in the world is a bore to watch, why should we care about him, or, more importantly, pay $50 to watch him fight on pay-per-view?

Perhaps a happier alternative would be what I'll call the "dollar-for-dollar" ratings, a listing of the fighters who, regardless of weight class, give boxing consumers the biggest bang for their bucks. You will notice by comparing the following list with THE RING's latest P-4-P ratings *(page 15)* that some names appear on both. But, overall, when it comes to which group I'd rather watch, it's no contest; the dollar-for-dollar dudes come out on top every time.

Two things to keep in mind when reviewing my dollar-for-dollar ratings: 1) It is, with one minor exception among the honorable mentions, restricted to world-class fighters and, therefore, does not include any of the numerous club fighters who regularly fight their hearts out for chump change (sorry, guys, but it is what it is); 2) The ratings are based on how the individual fighters have performed recently, not their overall careers.

1. Manny Pacquiao (*a once in a lifetime phenomenon)*
2. Jorge Arce (*charismatic kamikaze—and bleeder to boot)*
3. Jose Luis Castillo (*unrelenting warrior even made watching Mayweather fun)*
4. Rafael Marquez (*118-pounds of pure dynamite)*
5. Israel Vazquez (*tough, skillful boxer-puncher who loves to mix it up)*
6. Vic Darchinyan (*looks and fights like a psycho killer)*
7. Shane Mosley (*still classy, still fights with passion and panache)*
8. Marco Antonio Barrera (*slipping but remains must-watch TV)*
9. Antonio Margarito (*might be higher if top guys would fight him)*
10. Jorge Barrios (*balls to the wall every time out)*

Honorable mention (in alphabetical order): Tomas Adamek/Paul Briggs *(tandem entry)*, Emanuel Augustus, Diego Corrales, Miguel Cotto, Oscar De La Hoya *(if only he fought more often)*, Ricky Hatton, Kassim Ouma, Verno Phillips, Edwin Valero.

Let me assure readers who enjoy the pound-for-pound ratings that THE RING has no intention of dropping them in favor of dollar-for-dollar rankings. I simply offer them as an alternative way of looking at the men who make boxing so special.

Nigel Collins
Editor-in-Chief

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BANQUET OF CHAMPIONS

Reminiscing . . . "Sugar" Shane Mosley shares fight stories with banquet crowd.

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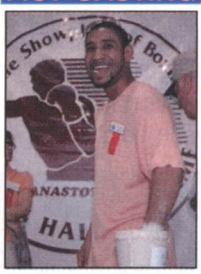
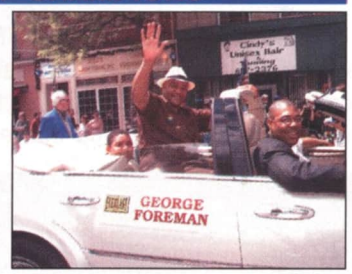


Everlasting . . . Fist cast by Diego Corrales.

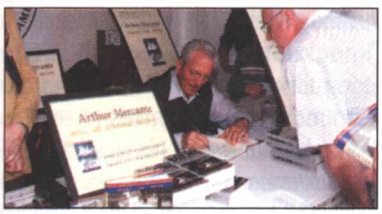
PARADE OF CHAMPIONS

Marvelous . . . Marvin Hagler waves to fans.



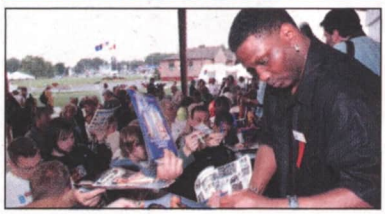
Hooray . . . George Foreman enjoys fans along parade route.

BOOK SIGNINGS



Hall of Fame referee Arthur Mercante signs his autobiography for the fans.

MUSEUM GROUNDS



Autographs . . . "Sweet Pea" Pernell Whitaker spends time signing autographs on the Museum grounds.

5K RACE, FUN RUN

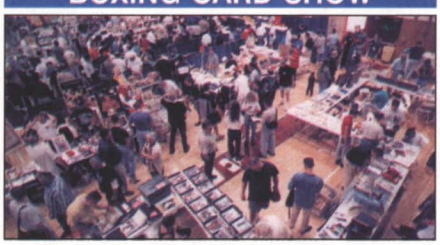
Finish Line . . . "Irish" Micky Ward in stride.

Go . . . Ken Norton officially starts race of celebrity boxers and runners.

INDUCTION CEREMONY

A Moment in Time . . . "Chiquita" Gonzalez and Michael Carbajal proudly show their Hall of Fame rings.

BOXING CARD SHOW



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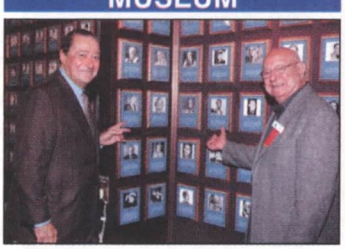
GOLF TOURNAMENT

Chip . . . Gerry Cooney (l) chips onto 18th green while Sir Henry Cooper (r) is enroute to next tee.

COCKTAIL PARTY

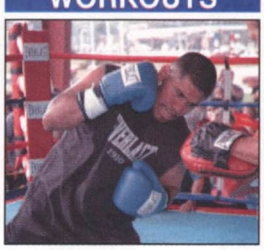
Stars . . . Boxers and fans enjoy VIP cocktail party reception.

MUSEUM



Bob Arum and Angelo Dundee point to their plaques on the Hall of Fame Wall.

WORKOUTS



Juan Diaz works the bag mitts during daily public workouts.

RINGSIDE TALKS

Having Fun. . . Micky Ward, Lou Duva, and Bert Sugar telling stories.

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Tyson's Tour To Nowhere

The "Mike Tyson World Tour" kicked off in front of an enthusiastic crowd of 4,000 on October 6, but it was a disgruntled group that exited Youngstown Ohio's Chevrolet Center afterward. Fans expecting a McNeely-like annihilation were instead subjected to exactly what Tyson said it was going to be—a sparring session between two out-of-shape fighters.

"I don't know what people were looking for, we weren't trying to fool anyone," said tour promoter Sterling McPherson.

While it is true that Tyson and McPherson were upfront about the nature of the exhibition, it's clear that those in attendance were hungry for a classic Tyson obliteration.

"I know it's just an exhibition, but I thought at least we'd get to see a knockout," said Tim Wallace, a long-time Tyson fan who had driven more than 100 miles to see Mr. Mike huff and puff his way through four rounds with Corey Sanders. "I wouldn't pay for this again."

The ticket prices ranged from $25 to $200. And while no figures were released, it is believed that pay-per-view sales (at $29.95) failed to reach the 20,000 mark. McPherson envisioned a grand tour reaching South Africa, China, South Korea, and other exotic locations. But after such a rocky start, what can keep the tour running?

As in almost anything Tyson-related, the utterly shocking may pull the former undisputed heavyweight champion through. Tyson has mused that he may fight female boxer Anne Wolf or Welsh singer Tom Jones. Spokespersons for Wolfe and Jones have denied any knowledge of this.

But the new content and relaxed "Iron Mike" may be the biggest hindrance to the tour rather than the unavailability of high profile or bizarre opponents. These days, Tyson is calmer, happier, and fatter, a recipe for disaster for a guy that found his niche among fans who crave violence and sensationalism.

—Yousef Faroniya

PHOTO BY MARTY ROSENGARTEN

Tyson and dance partner Sanders

Honoring Gypsy Joe

Anthony Molock, brother and biographer of Gypsy Joe Harris, and Philadelphia boxing historian John DiSanto unveil the headstone of the legendary welterweight during a dedication ceremony at the previously unmarked grave in Merion Memorial Park in Bala Cynwyd, Pennsylvania. Also pictured are Arneta Miller and Renee Rex, two of the boxer's sisters.

DiSanto raises money to erect headstones at the unmarked graves of Philadelphia fighters. Those wishing to contribute can get details at: phillyboxinghistory.com

PHOTO BY JACK TINNEY

Trevor Berbick, 1954-2006

At best, Trevor Berbick will be remembered as a bridge in boxing history, a brawny, tough guy who ushered out Muhammad Ali and introducing a 20-year-old Mike Tyson to the world stage.

Tragically, Berbick will also remember as a troubled figure whose life ended prematurely, on October 28, in a church courtyard next to the home where he was raised in the parish of Port Anthony, Jamaica, about 80 miles east of Kingston. The cause of death was wounds to the back of the 52-year-old Berbick's head. Jamaican police said a two-inch thick metal pipe discovered at the scene was believed to be the murder weapon.

Berbick: Murdered in Jamaica

On November 2, Jamaican authorities arrested Harold Berbick, the 20-year-old nephew of Berbick, and 18-year-old Kenton Gordon and charged them both with murder. According to the police, the nephew's mother, who was detained for questioning and released, had been involved in a long-running land dispute with Berbick. Earlier in '06, Berbick was charged with assault for allegedly punching the woman.

Berbick had been living in the area since being deported from the United States in 2002, where he'd been charged with larceny for breaking into his sister-in-law's house in '02. The investigation into the retired boxer's death was still ongoing when this magazine went to press.

Berbick, who turned pro in September 1976 after representing Jamaica in the 1976 Olympics, will be forever etched in boxing history as the last man to fight Ali. He won a 10-round decision over the faded former champion on December 11, 1981, in Nassau, Bahamas. It was, however, a hollow victory, as Ali was two weeks shy of his 40th birthday and had been stopped by Larry Holmes in his previous fight.

The following year, Berbick handed Greg Page his first defeat, but subsequent losses to Renaldo Snipes and ST Gordon sent him tumbling back down the ratings. Berbick regrouped, put together another winning streak, and, on March 3, 1986, he won the WBC heavyweight title with a 12-round decision over Pinklon Thomas. It was Berbick's second crack a WBC belt, having dropped a 15-round decision to Holmes on April 11, 1981.

Eight months after beating Thomas, Berbick, making his first defense, lost the title to Tyson in a brief, brutal fight remembered for the perversely comical way Berbick went down three times from a single punch in the second round.

After that, Berbick gradually slipped into anonymity. He went 18-6 against mostly dubious opposition in his last 24 fights, but managed to finish on a winning note, when he successfully defended the Canadian heavyweight title with a 12-round decision over Shane Sutcliffe on May 26, 2000.

"Trevor was just a tough guy," said Bobby Goodman, Don King's matchmaker, who worked with Berbick from 1980-'85. "He might have lacked the talent, but he always made up for it with courage and desire. He was a tough guy to keep down."

Following his retirement in 2000, Berbick, 50-11-1 (33), was convicted in the U.S. for sexual assault, grand theft, and burglary. It wasn't the first time Berbick had been in trouble with the law. In '91, he was convicted of attacking his former business manager, who testified Berbick put a gun to her head. In '92, he was convicted of raping a family babysitter in Florida and was sentenced to four years in prison. He also was convicted that year of forging his former wife's signature to get a mortgage.

After serving 15 months, Berbick was deported to Canada. He eventually moved back to the United States, but was deported again.

Berbick married twice and is survived by six children.

—Joseph Santoliquito

TV Fights of the Month

Compiled by William Dettloff

Date	Winner/Loser	Network	Division	Significance	Matchup	Result
10/20/06	Jesus Soto Karass KO 11 Michel Rosales	Telefutura	w	C	C+	B
Karass pulls off the upset in good back-and-forth brawl						
10/21/06	Juan Lazcano W 10 Manuel Garnica	HBO PPV	w	C+	C	C+
Hey Juan, when your hometown crowd boos the decision, you know you got a gift						
10/21/06	Daniel Ponce De Leon KO 8 Al Seeger	HBO PPV	jf	B-	C-	C-
If you paid for this, you're either a member of Ponce De Leon's immediate family or you're off your meds again						
10/27/06	Joel Julio W 12 Cosme Rivera	Telemundo	w	C+	B-	B-
For perspective, remember that Rivera is the guy who didn't last three rounds with Zab Judah in May 2005						
10/28/06	Kermit Cintron KO 6 Mark Suarez	MAX PPV	w	B-	C-	B-
This was nice, but who else thinks Margarito-Cintron II would turn out the same way as Margarito-Cintron I?						
11/2/06	Ahmed Kaddour W 8 Jesus Valverde	Versus	w	C	B+	D+
Don't know about you, but we find Kaddour a lot more interesting outside the ring than in						
11/2/06	Kelly Pavlik KO 4 Lenord Pierre	Versus	m	C+	C	C+
Who the hell knew Pavlik could hit like this?						
11/3/06	Shamone Alvarez W 8 Enrique Gutierrez	Showtime	w	C-	B+	C
Gutierrez could have made this a lot better for himself if he stepped forward and moved his hands						
11/3/06	Kendall Holt W 12 Isaac Hlatshwayo	Showtime	jw	C+	B	C+
If this doesn't get Holt a big fight, someone's not greasing the right palm						
11/4/06	Shannon Briggs KO 12 Sergei Liakhovich	Showtime	h	B-	B+	D+
If we want to watch two guys groping one another all night, we'll turn on the UFC; next time try punching, guys						
11/4/06	Chris Arreola KO 7 Damian Wills	HBO PPV	h	C	A-	B-
An undefeated record does not a contender make						
11/4/06	Paul Williams KO 6 Santos Pakau	HBO PPV	w	B-	F	D-
This is what your 50 bucks got you; what an abomination						
11/4/06	Orlando Salido W 12 Robert Guerrero	HBO PPV	f	B+	C+	C+
Hey, do you think that afterward Guerrero blamed Jesus for making him lose?						
11/4/06	**Floyd Mayweather W 12 Carlos Baldomir**	**HBO PPV**	**world w**	**A+**	**C+**	**B**
Not every great performance ends up with brain matter sprinkled on the canvas; good for you, Floyd						
11/10/06	Golden Johnson KO 11 Oscar Diaz	FOXSN PPV	w	B-	B+	A-
Good for Johnson, who's been around a long time and really knows how to fight						
11/10/06	Jose Navarro W 10 Gabriel Elizondo	FOXSN PPV	jb	B-	C+	C+
Solid win for Navarro, who does pretty well for a guy who can't punch						
11/10/06	Evander Holyfield W 12 Fres Oquendo	FOXSN PPV	h	C-	B	D-
Fres, you might want to try another sport; women's basketball is nice						
11/11/06	Wladimir Klitschko KO 7 Calvin Brock	HBO	h	A	B-	B-
Is Brock's face made of loose rubber, or did the super slow-mo and Klitschko's right hands just make it look that way?						
11/16/06	Jose Luis Cruz W 8 Archak Ter-Meliksetian	Versus	jm	C	C+	B
Another Versus show in which the prelim turned out to be better than the main event						
11/16/06	Hector Velazquez W DQ 11 Bobby Pacquiao	Versus	jl	C+	B-	C
Based on the postfight interview, who else thinks Pacquiao has a future in politics?						
11/17/06	Travis Walker W 8 Jason Estrada	Showtime	h	C	B+	D+
Good for Walker; we hate those quick-handed chubby guys						
11/17/06	Sam Soliman W 10 Enrique Ornelas	Showtime	m	B-	B+	B-
After a good start, Ornelas let this get away; or, more accurately, Soliman took it						
11/18/06	Omar Nino D 12 Brian Viloria	HBO PPV	jfl	A	A	B-
Hey, this was better than the first fight; how about a third one?						
11/18/06	Ricardo Torres W 12 Mike Arnaoutis	HBO PPV	jw	B-	A	C+
Whether or not Torres deserved it, he looked nothing like the guy who almost beat Miguel Cotto						
11/18/06	Manny Pacquiao KO 3 Erik Morales	HBO PPV	jl	A+	A	B+
Well, you can't say Morales didn't go down fighting						

Category Explanation: "Significance"—The importance of the bout to the division and the fighters' futures; "Matchup"—The quality of the fighters and the prefight determination of how their styles will mesh; "Result"—How the bout turned out, from the viewer's perspective.

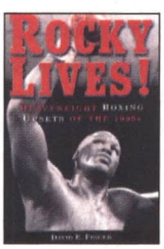
(RING championship fights in **bold** type)

Division key: h—heavyweight; c—cruiserweight; lh—light heavyweight; sm—super middleweight; m—middleweight; jm—junior middleweight; w—welterweight; jw—junior welterweight; l—lightweight; jl—junior lightweight; f—featherweight; jf—junior featherweight; b—bantamweight; jb—junior bantamweight; fl—flyweight; jfl—junior flyweight; s—strawweight

Network key: PPV—Pay-Per-View; Show—Showtime; FOXSN—Fox Sports Net;Uni—Univision; Telef—Telefutura; Telem—Telemundo; HBO L—HBO Latino; Outdoor Life Network—OLN; maxboxing.com—MAX

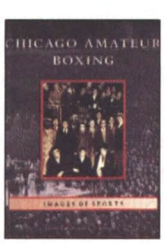
Boxing Bookshelf

There is nothing more dramatic in boxing than watching an upset unfold. Whether it is a four-round fight in which some nonentity with a losing record unexpectedly trounces an undefeated local favorite, or an inspired Evander Holyfield definitively cutting down Mike Tyson's mystique of invincibility, there is something riveting in the spectacle. It offers an unspoken reassurance that no matter how prohibitive the circumstances we sometimes face in our personal lives, hard work, singular will, and perhaps a little old-fashioned good luck can be enough to surmount the odds. Boxing has always served as the ultimate real-world metaphor in this regard.



Take for example David Finger's book *Rocky Lives! Heavyweight Boxing Upsets of the 1990s* (Potomac Books Inc, 352 pages, hardbound, $26.95). At first glance, it might seem a little unusual to dedicate a book exclusively to the triumphs of heavyweight underdogs in the 1990s. But true to its title, the "Rocky" myth does indeed live and the book provides us with many (75 to be exact) examples of how supposed no-hopers defied all expectations to pull off the long shot win.

Finger takes us through the '90s, year-by-year, and offers easily digestible accounts of fights that sometimes derailed promising young careers or occasionally reshaped the heavyweight landscape at its top echelon. This is no small task considering he is able to provide equal context to major events such as Buster Douglas' stunning kayo of Tyson and less mainstream bouts such as William Morris' eight-round upset of then-undefeated Ray Anis. Finger does an admirable job of providing critical background to every fight and detailing the eventual trajectory each fighter's career took in the aftermath. And while over-reliance on recycled adjectives often make the fight descriptions tedious to read, Finger proves adept at keeping each encounter original and entertaining.



The most enjoyable aspect of *Rocky Lives!* is the way it churns up good memories of a time that has moved away from us so quickly. It's hard to believe that it has been almost 17 years since Douglas stunned the sports world in Tokyo. In fact, reading *Rocky Lives!* is a little bit like reaching into the closet and digging out those back issues of THE RING. The fights and fighters are touchstones in a sense, and it's always fun and a little inspirational to reminisce about some of the stirring upsets of the past.

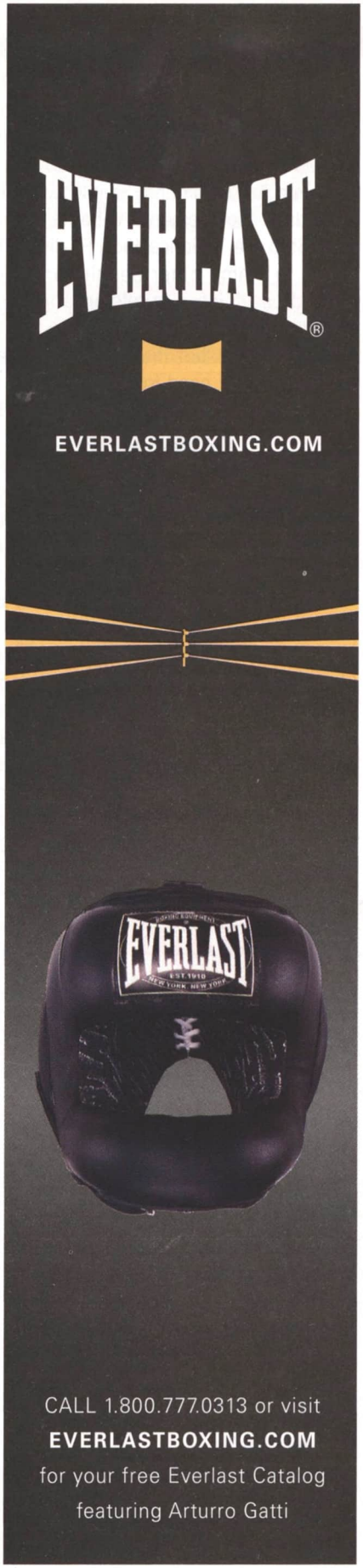
—Paul Salgado

If you haven't cottoned onto Arcadia Publishing's Images of America series, you've missed an excellent collection of books. The group publishes slim regional volumes on subjects ranging from baseball to bridges to architecture. Fortunately for readers of THE RING, Arcadia's backlog also includes boxing editions created for New York, Chicago, Detroit, Cleveland, San Francisco, Baltimore, Boston, and Philadelphia. The latest, *Cincinnati Boxing* (Arcadia Press, 126 pages, paperback, $19.99), is as fine as Arcadia's previous boxing titles.

Cincinnati doesn't always spring to mind when discussing fight history, but authors Kevin and Joshua Grace bring the city into focus with dozens of interesting items, including the time Cincinnati cops busted John L. Sullivan just before his 1885 bout with Dominick McCaffrey (the first championship bout fought with gloves on American soil, by the way). As expected, most of the book focuses on the city's favorite fighting son, Ezzard Charles. Unfortunately, only fleeting coverage is given to more recent Cincinnati fighters such as Aaron Pryor and Tony Tubbs.

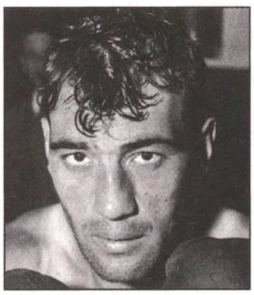
Arcadia books are known for their rare photographs, and Cincinnati Boxing includes a great shot of local heavyweight Billy Joiner taking an elbow in the face from Sonny Liston. That's a tough way to be remembered, but Joiner would admit it's nice to be included in such an elegant little book.

—Don Stradley



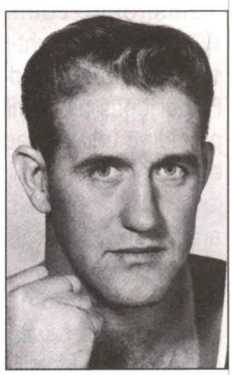
Outside the Ropes

Super middleweight contender **Peter Manfredo Jr.** appeared at the Brown Elementary School in Johnson, Rhode Island, to help kick off the American Heart Association's annual "Jump Rope For The Heart" campaign ... **Roy Jones** also got into the community spirit by making the rounds in Montgomery, Alabama, to promote the Stop the Violence Kids Festival. "People want to blame other people for what happened," said Jones in reference to the recent shooting death of Montgomery police officer **Keith Houts**, "but the truth is we are all to blame. People need to come together and fix these problems" ... Italian director **Renzo Martinelli** is making a TV movie about former heavyweight champion **Primo Carnera**. The two-parter, for the Berlusconi network, features American actors **F. Murray Abraham** and **Burt Young**, while unknown Italian **Andrea Iaia** portrays Carnera. "Giovanna Maria Carnera, Primo's 62-year-old daughter, burst into tears when she saw Iaia because of how much he looked like her father," said Martinelli. The movie is part of an array of events to be held on the 100th anniversary of Carnera's birth ... The **WBC** has approved a version of open scoring during its title bouts, which permits the scores of fights to be announced after the fourth and eighth rounds ... In other alphabet organization news, Colombian judges **Martin** and **Leonel Mercado**, who are brothers, have been banned for life due to their controversial scoring of the **Irene Pacheco-Leon Moore** WBO bantamweight title bout in Barranquilla, Colombia. Martin and Leonel scored the fight for Pacheco, 115-113 and 116-113, respectively, in a fight that virtually everybody else thought Moore had won. The third judge, **Manuel Arroyo**, scored it for Moore, 115-113 ... Detroit's famous **Kronk Gym** received what could very well be a knockout blow when thieves entered the building through a window and made off with the copper pipes from the boiler room, cutting off the gym's water supply. The gym, housed in a city-run recreational center, was already in serious financial trouble due to city budget cuts. Hall of Fame trainer **Emanuel Steward**, who rose to fame by training a group of champions at the gym during the 1980s, is also dealing with the fallout from a botched fundraiser. A $1-million donation from an Internet business never materialized and Steward is still trying to pay off all the expenses from the fundraiser ... Heavyweight contender **Nicolay Valuev** was successful in having a default judgment against him thrown out, when New Jersey Federal District Judge **Jerome Simandle** ruled that the contract between Valuev and promoter **Joseph O'Donnell** did not have any legal basis because it called for both management and promotion of the fighter, which is against the law in the United States ... Manager **Yuval Margalit** has sued heavyweight **James Toney** in Los Angeles Superior Court, alleging breach of a written contract. Margalit is suing for $132,500 ... Former bantamweight world champion **Alphonse Halimi**, 74, died in France on November 12 from complications of pneumonia. He had suffered with Alzheimer's disease his final five years. Halimi was born in Constantine, Algeria, in 1932, and moved to France, where, as a boy, he was inspired to box when he learned of middleweight champion **Marcel Cerdan**, a fellow Algeria-born Frenchman. Halimi turned pro in 1955 and was undefeated when he captured the 118-pound title with a 15-round decision over **Mario D'Agata** in '57. After one successful defense, Halimi lost the belt to **Jose Becerra**, who knocked him out in the eighth round of a bout held in Los Angeles in July '59. Halimi continued to campaign successfully in Europe for a few more years, and holds the distinction of headlining the first professional boxing card held in Israel, where he outpointed **Piero Rollo** on June 26, 1961, in Tel Aviv to win the European bantam crown. The popular Halimi had his final bout in November '64, leaving an overall record of 41-8-1 (21). After retiring from the ring, he worked as a tailor, trainer, and café owner. In 1999, the WBC, to its credit, established a food and medical fund for the near-destitute ex-champ ... Utah heavyweight **LaMar Clark**, 72, died on November 11. Clark, who turned pro in 1955, gained fame by scoring 44 consecutive knockouts, but most came against dubious opposition. He never developed into a serious contender. Clark's kayo streak ended in April 1960, when he was stopped by **Bartolo Soni**. On April 19, 1961, Clark faced **Cassius Clay**, who was engaging in his second professional bout. Clark, 47-3-1 (45), was knocked out in the second round and never fought again.



Carnera: Subject of TV movie

Hamili: Pneumonia victim



Clark: Dead at 72

Quotable

"That's really going to (mess) with his head, you watch. The only thing that would make it different is if my terms aren't met, and I'm not in the corner. But, otherwise, his daddy's got something for him—a spanking."

—Floyd Mayweather Sr., predicting what will happen to his son if Big Floyd trains Oscar De La Hoya for his May 5 showdown with "Pretty Boy"

"He pushed me and ripped my clothes ... I began to scream and he covered my mouth. One can offer little resistance to a mastodon."

—Cuban journalist Lissette Bustamante, describing what took place when Teofilo Stevenson allegedly raped her in 1988

[Ratings Analysis]

For Period Ended November 20, 2006

Heavyweights: Shannon Briggs enters at five, replacing the man he stopped, Sergei Liakhovich, who slips to sixth. Lamon Brewster (sixth last issue) and Nicolay Valuev (seventh last issue) each drop one place. Ruslan Chagaev debuts at nine, after a split-decision victory over number-10 John Ruiz (eighth last issue).

Cruiserweights: Guillermo Jones (first last issue) drops out of the rankings due to inactivity, making Steve Cunningham (second last issue) first. Everyone from second to seventh moves up one spot. Enzo Maccarinelli (10th last issue) jumps to eight. Firat Arslan debuts at nine, based on his fifth-round TKO of Grigory Drozd (ninth last issue). Johnathan Banks enters at 10.

Light heavyweights: No changes.

Super middleweights: No changes.

Middleweights: No changes.

Junior middleweights: No changes.

Welterweights: Floyd Mayweather (first last issue) won the world championship with a dominant performance against Carlos Baldomir, who falls to second. Antonio Margarito (second last issue) moves to number-one.

Junior welterweights: Kendall Holt replaces Cesar Rene Cuenca at 10, based on Holt's sterling 12-round decision over Isaac Hlatshwayo.

Lightweights: The division continues to be the most active in boxing, as Jose Santa Cruz (ninth last issue) moves to eight, and Graham Earl comes in at nine. Yuri Romanov debuts at 10 after stopping Juan Carlos Diaz (eighth last issue) in three rounds. Ramazan Palyani exits from the number-10 position after suffering a TKO loss.

Junior lightweights: Manny Pacquiao's third-round demolition of Erik Morales causes a slight change, as Morales (third last issue) switches positions with Joan Guzman (fourth last issue).

Featherweights: Humberto Soto (third last issue) departs to campaign at junior lightweight. The move causes everyone from three to 10 to move up one place, enabling Jorge Solis to enter at 10.

Junior featherweights: Bernard Dunne enters at 10, replacing Michael Hunter, who drops from the rankings after a fifth-round knockout loss to seventh-rated Steve Molitor.

Bantamweights: Ratanachai Vorapin (seventh last issue) switches with Genaro Garcia (sixth last issue).

Junior bantamweights: No changes.

Flyweights: No changes.

Junior flyweights: No changes.

Strawweights: No changes.

Pound-for-pound: Manny Pacquiao (third last issue) moves to two, switching places with Winky Wright, based on Pac-Man's impressive third-round knockout of Erik Morales.

The RING®
"THE BIBLE OF BOXING"®

Pound-For-Pound

1. **Floyd Mayweather**
   Welterweight
2. **Manny Pacquiao**
   Junior Lightweight
3. **Winky Wright**
   Middleweight
4. **Jermain Taylor**
   Middleweight
5. **Bernard Hopkins**
   Light Heavyweight
6. **Marco Antonio Barrera**
   Junior Lightweight
7. **Rafael Marquez**
   Bantamweight
8. **Ricky Hatton**
   Junior Welterweight
9. **Jose Luis Castillo**
   Junior Welterweight
10. **Joe Calzaghe**
    Super Middleweight

For weekly updated Ring ratings, go to
TheRing-online.com

[The Ring Ratings]

For Period Ended November 20, 2006

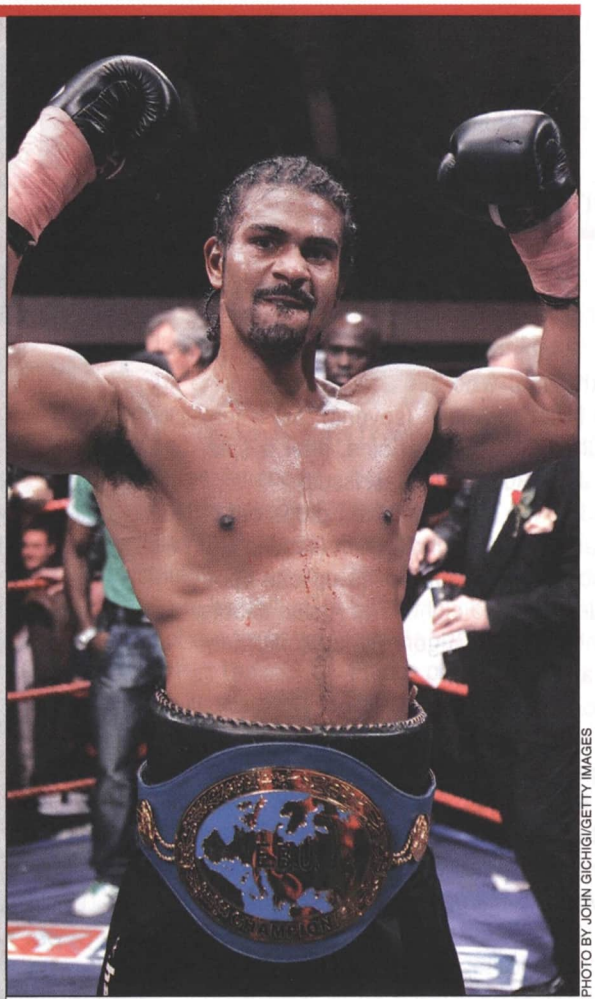


PHOTO BY JOHN GICHIGI/GETTY IMAGES

David Haye jumps from seventh to fifth at cruiserweight

How Our Ratings Are Compiled

Fighters recognized as champions by The Ring are rated at the top of their division, with the top 10 contenders listed below.

Championship vacancies can be filled by winning a box-off between The Ring's number-one and number-two contenders, or, in certain instances, a box-off between our number-one and number-three contenders.

The only three occasions when a fighter will lose his championship status are when he retires, moves to another weight division, or is defeated in a championship bout.

Ratings By The Editors

Heavyweights

Weight Unlimited

Champ: Vacant

1. **WLADIMIR KLITSCHKO** Ukraine 47-3 (42)
2. **OLEG MASKAEV** Staten Island, NY 33-5 (26)
3. **SAMUEL PETER** Las Vegas, NV 27-1 (22)
4. **JAMES TONEY** Ann Arbor, MI 69-5-3 (43)
5. **SHANNON BRIGGS** Brooklyn, NY 48-4-1 (42)
6. **SERGEI LIAKHOVICH** Belarus, 23-2 (14)
7. **LAMON BREWSTER** Los Angeles, CA 33-3 (29)
8. **NICOLAY VALUEV** Russia 45-0 (33)
9. **RUSLAN CHAGAEV** Uzbekistan 22-0-1 (17)
10. **JOHN RUIZ** Methuen, MA 41-7-1 (28)

Jr. Middleweights

Weight Limit: 154 pounds

Champ: Vacant

1. **SHANE MOSLEY** Pomona, CA 43-4 (37)
2. **CORY SPINKS** St. Louis, MO 35-3 (11)
3. **ROMAN KARMAZIN** Russia 34-2-1 (21)
4. **KASSIM OUMA** W. Palm Beach, FL 25-2-1 (15)
5. **SERGEI DZINDZIRUK** Germany 32-0 (21)
6. **OSCAR DE LA HOYA** Los Angeles, CA 38-4 (30)
7. **FERNANDO VARGAS** Oxnard, CA 26-4 (22)
8. **VERNON FORREST** Atlanta. GA 38-2 (28)
9. **IKE QUARTEY** Ghana 37-3-1 (31)
10. **VERNO PHILLIPS** Aurora, CO 40-10-1 (21)

Featherweights

Weight Limit: 126 pounds

Champ: Vacant

1. **CHRIS JOHN** Indonesia 38-0-1 (20)
2. **JUAN MANUEL MARQUEZ** Mexico 45-3-1 (34)
3. **RODOLFO LOPEZ** Mexico 19-2-1 (13)
4. **TAKASHI KOSHIMOTO** Japan 39-1-2 (17)
5. **INJIN CHI** South Korea 30-3-1 (18)
6. **SCOTT HARRISON** Scotland 25-2-2 (14)
7. **SPEND ABAZI** Denmark 32-1 (10)
8. **HIROYUKI ENOKI** Japan 25-0-1 (18)
9. **NICKY COOK** England 26-0 (15)
10. **JORGE SOLIS** Mexico 31-0-2 (22)

Jr. Featherweights

Weight Limit: 122 pounds

Champ: ISRAEL VAZQUEZ Mexico 41-3 (31)

1. **CELESTINO CABALLERO** Panama 25-2 (18)
2. **RICARDO CORDOBA** Panama 28-1-1 (19)
3. **SOMSAK SITHCHATCHAWAL** Thailand 46-2-1 (37)
4. **DANIEL PONCE DE LEON** Mexico 30-1 (28)
5. **SERGIO MANUEL MEDINA** Argentina 25-0 (15)
6. **GABULA VABAZA** South Africa 23-0-1 (5)
7. **STEVE MOLITOR** Canada 23-0 (9)
8. **JHONNY GONZALEZ** Mexico 33-5 (28)
9. **TAKALANI NDLOVU** South Africa 26-3 (17)
10. **BERNARD DUNNE** Ireland 22-0 (13)

Bantamweights

Weight Limit: 118 pounds

Champ: Vacant

1. **RAFAEL MARQUEZ** Mexico 36-3 (32)
2. **HOZUMI HASEGAWA** Japan 21-2 (7)
3. **VEERAPOL SAHAPROM** Thailand 52-3-2 (37)
4. **WLADIMIR SIDORENKO** Ukraine 19-0-1 (6)
5. **SILENCE MABUZA** South Africa 19-2 (15)
6. **RATANACHAI VORAPIN** Thailand 67-9 (44)
7. **GENARO GARCIA** Mexico 35-5 (20)
8. **IRENE PACHECO** Colombia 33-1 (24)
9. **SIMONE MALUDROTTU** Italy 23-1 (9)
10. **POONSAWAT KRATINGAENGGYM** Thailand 25-1 (16)

Cruiserweights
Weight Limit: 200 pounds

Champ: O'NEIL BELL
Atlanta, GA 26-1-1 (24)

1. **STEVE CUNNINGHAM**
Philadelphia, PA 19-0 (10)
2. **JEAN-MARC MORMECK**
France 32-3 (22)
3. **WAYNE BRAITHWAITE**
Guyana 21-2 (17)
4. **PIETRO AURINO**
Italy 34-2 (16)
5. **DAVID HAYE**
England 18-1 (17)
6. **KRZYSZTOF WLODARCZK**
Poland 36-1 (27)
7. **VADIM TOKAREV**
Russia 22-0-1 (15)
8. **ENZO MACCARINELLI**
Wales 25-1 (19)
9. **FIRAT ARSLAN**
Germany 26-3-1 (18)
10. **JOHNATHAN BANKS**
Detroit, MI 12-0 (9)

Light Heavyweights
Weight Limit: 175 pounds

Champ: BERNARD HOPKINS
Philadelphia, PA 47-4-1 (32)

1. **ANTONIO TARVER**
Orlando, FL 24-4 (18)
2. **ZSOLT ERDEI**
Hungary 25-0 (15)
3. **CLINTON WOODS**
England 40-3-1 (24)
4. **GLEN JOHNSON**
Miami, FL 44-11-2 (29)
5. **TOMASZ ADAMEK**
Poland 31-0 (21)
6. **PAUL BRIGGS**
Australia 25-3 (18)
7. **ROY JONES**
Pensacola, FL 50-4 (38)
8. **JULIO GONZALEZ**
Huntington Beach, CA 41-3 (25)
9. **HUGO GARAY**
Argentina 26-2 (13)
10. **CHAD DAWSON**
New Haven, CT 23-0 (15)

Super Middleweights
Weight Limit: 168 pounds

Champ: JOE CALZAGHE
Wales 42-0 (31)

1. **MIKKEL KESSLER**
Denmark 38-0 (29)
2. **ANTHONY MUNDINE**
Australia 27-3 (21)
3. **JEFF LACY**
St. Petersburg, FL 21-1 (17)
4. **MARKUS BEYER**
Germany 34-3-1 (13)
5. **LIBRADO ANDRADE**
Mexico 24-0 (18)
6. **LUCIAN BUTE**
Canada 17-0 (16)
7. **CARL FROCH**
England 19-0 (15)
8. **ALLAN GREEN**
Tulsa, OK 23-0 (16)
9. **DENIS INKIN**
Germany 29-0 (22)
10. **PETER MANFREDO JR.**
Pawtucket, RI 26-3 (12)

Middleweights
Weight Limit: 160 pounds

Champ: JERMAIN TAYLOR
Little Rock, AR 25-0-1 (17)

1. **WINKY WRIGHT**
St. Petersburg, FL 50-3-1 (25)
2. **ARTHUR ABRAHAM**
Germany 22-0 (17)
3. **EDISON MIRANDA**
Colombia 26-1 (23)
4. **JAVIER CASTILLEJO**
Spain 61-6 (41)
5. **SAM SOLIMAN**
Australia 33-8 (13)
6. **FELIX STURM**
Germany 25-2 (11)
7. **AMIN ASIKAINEN**
Finland 18-0 (14)
8. **SEBASTIAN SYLVESTER**
Germany 23-2 (10)
9. **KINGSLEY IKEKE**
Canada 23-2 (13)
10. **SCOTT DANN**
England 25-2 (17)

Welterweights
Weight Limit: 147 pounds

Champ: FLOYD MAYWEATHER
Grand Rapids, MI 37-0 (24)

1. **ANTONIO MARGARITO**
Mexico 33-4 (24)
2. **CARLOS BALDOMIR**
Argentina 43-10-6 (13)
3. **ZAB JUDAH**
Brooklyn, NY 34-4 (25)
4. **LUIS COLLAZO**
Queens, NY 27-2 (13)
5. **KERMIT CINTRON**
Reading, PA 27-1 (25)
6. **OKTAY URKAL**
Germany 37-3 (11)
7. **ARTURO GATTI**
Jersey City, NJ 40-8 (31)
8. **PAUL WILLIAMS**
Augusta, GA 32-0 (24)
9. **CARLOS QUINTANA**
Puerto Rico 23-0 (18)
10. **JOSHUA CLOTTEY**
Ghana 29-1 (18)

Jr. Welterweights
Weight Limit: 140 pounds

Champ: RICKY HATTON
England 41-0 (30)

1. **MIGUEL COTTO**
Puerto Rico 27-0 (22)
2. **JOSE LUIS CASTILLO**
Mexico 54-7-1 (47)
3. **JUNIOR WITTER**
England 34-1-2 (19)
4. **VIVIAN HARRIS**
Brooklyn, NY 27-2-1 (18)
5. **LOVEMORE NDOU**
Australia 43-8-1 (28)
6. **DeMARCUS CORLEY**
Washington, D.C. 31-5-1 (17)
7. **JUAN LAZCANO**
El Paso, TX 37-3-1 (27)
8. **SOULEYMANE M'BAYE**
France 35-1 (20)
9. **DEMETRIUS HOPKINS**
Philadelphia, PA 24-0-1 (10)
10. **KENDALL HOLT**
Paterson, NJ 21-1 (12)

Lightweights
Weight Limit: 135 pounds

Champ: JOEL CASAMAYOR
Miami, FL 34-3-1 (21)

1. **JUAN DIAZ**
Houston, TX 31-0 (15)
2. **JULIO DIAZ**
Coachella, CA 33-3 (24)
3. **ZAHIR RAHEEM**
Las Vegas, NV 27-2 (16)
4. **JESUS CHAVEZ**
Mexico 42-3 (29)
5. **DAVID DIAZ**
Chicago, IL 32-1-1 (17)
6. **NATE CAMPBELL**
Jacksonville, FL 29-5-1 (24)
7. **ALMAZBEK RAIYMKULOV**
Las Vegas, NV 23-1-1 (14)
8. **JOSE SANTA CRUZ**
Mexico 23-2 (13)
9. **GRAHAM EARL**
England 25-1 (12)
10. **YURI ROMANOV**
Belarus 18-2 (12)

Jr. Lightweights
Weight Limit: 130 pounds

Champ: Vacant

1. **MANNY PACQUIAO**
Philippines 43-3-2 (33)
2. **MARCO ANTONIO BARRERA**
Mexico 63-4 (42)
3. **JOAN GUZMAN**
Dominican Republic 26-0 (17)
4. **ERIK MORALES**
Mexico 48-5 (34)
5. **JORGE BARRIOS**
Argentina 46-3-1 (33)
6. **ROCKY JUAREZ**
Houston, TX 26-3 (18)
7. **EDWIN VALERO**
Venezuela 20-0 (20)
8. **VICENTE MOSQUERA**
Panama 24-2-1 (12)
9. **YODSANAN NANTHACHAI**
Thailand 47-3-1 (38)
10. **ALEX ARTHUR**
Scotland 24-1 (18)

Jr. Bantamweights
Weight Limit: 115 pounds

Champ: Vacant

1. **MASAMORI TOKUYAMA**
North Korea 32-3-1 (8)
2. **NOBUO NASHIRO**
Japan 8-0 (5)
3. **MARTIN CASTILLO**
Mexico 30-2 (16)
4. **LUIS PEREZ**
Nicaragua 24-1 (15)
5. **FERNANDO MONTIEL**
Mexico 32-2-1 (24)
6. **ALEXANDER MUNOZ**
Venezuela 28-2 (26)
7. **CRISTIAN MIJARES**
Mexico 29-3-2 (11)
8. **KATSUSHIGE KAWASHIMA**
Japan 30-5 (20)
9. **JORGE ARCE**
Mexico 45-3-1 (35)
10. **JOSE NAVARRO**
Los Angeles, CA 24-2 (10)

Flyweights
Weight Limit: 112 pounds

Champ: Vacant

1. **PONGSAKLEK WONJONGKAM**
Thailand 63-2 (32)
2. **LORENZO PARRA**
Venezuela 27-0 (17)
3. **VIC DARCHINYAN**
Australia 27-0 (21)
4. **OMAR NARVAEZ**
Argentina 23-0-2 (15)
5. **BRAHIM ASLOUM**
France 20-1 (7)
6. **TAKEFUMI SAKATA**
Japan 28-3-1 (13)
7. **VICTOR BURGOS**
Mexico 39-14-3 (22)
8. **LUIS MALDONADO**
Mexico 33-1-1 (25)
9. **DAISUKE NAITO**
Japan 29-2-2 (19)
10. **JOSE LOPEZ**
Puerto Rico 33-7-2 (29)

Jr. Flyweights
Weight Limit: 108 pounds

Champ: HUGO CAZARES
Mexico 24-3-1 (18)

1. **ULISES SOLIS**
Mexico 22-1-2 (16)
2. **KOKI KAMEDA**
Japan 12-0 (10)
3. **JUAN LANDAETA**
Venezuela 20-4-1 (16)
4. **NELSON DIEPPA**
Puerto Rico 24-3-2 (13)
5. **OMAR NINO**
Mexico 24-2-2 (10)
6. **BRIAN VILORIA**
Waipahu, HI 19-1-1 (12)
7. **WILL GRIGSBY**
St. Paul, MN 18-3-1 (7)
8. **JOSE AGUIRRE**
Mexico 34-5-1 (20)
9. **NOBUAKI MASUDA**
Japan 23-3-1 (3)
10. **OMAR SALADO**
Mexico 14-0-2 (7)

Strawweights
Weight Limit: 105 pounds

Champ: Vacant

1. **IVAN CALDERON**
Puerto Rico 27-0 (6)
2. **YUTAKA NIIDA**
Japan 20-1-3 (8)
3. **MUHAMMAD RACHMAN**
Indonesia 51-7-4 (23)
4. **EAGLE KYOWA**
Japan 17-1 (6)
5. **KATSUNARI TAKAYAMA**
Japan 18-2 (7)
6. **OMAR SOTO**
Mexico 15-3-1 (10)
7. **DANIEL REYES**
Colombia 37-4-1 (30)
8. **RODEL MAYOL**
Philippines 23-1 (18)
9. **ISAAC BUSTOS**
Mexico 24-8-3 (13)
10. **ERIBERTO GEJON**
Philippines 21-1-1 (13)

By Jeff Ryan

From One Headhunter To Another

To call Mike Tyson a sideshow, as seems to be in fashion nowadays, is to do a disservice to all those bearded ladies, sword-swallowers, and diving horses that entertained people throughout the years without being jeered in the process.

The ex-champ may not be serving as a photo prop, the way Joe Louis did at Caesars Palace in retirement, nor is "I-Earn Mike" reduced to shining shoes, ala Beau Jack. Regardless, there wasn't a whole lot of dignity in a future Hall of Famer failing to sell out a 6,000-seat arena in October for an exhibition against an ex-sparring partner with a bad eye.

So this is the Mike Tyson World Tour, eh? It makes Ozzy Osbourne's heavy metal Ozzfest look classy. This might have been the most boring public performance we've ever seen from Tyson, a guy whose press conferences (impromptu brawls, threats to eat children after stomping on their reproductive organs, etc.) were once more entertaining than a lot of fighters' bouts. Wearing a T-shirt, sucking wind, and holding up his "opponent," Corey Sanders, "Leg-Iron Mike" bore about as much resemblance to the self-proclaimed "baddest man on the planet" as Corey Sanders did to Corrie Sanders, the once-formidable South African heavyweight contender.

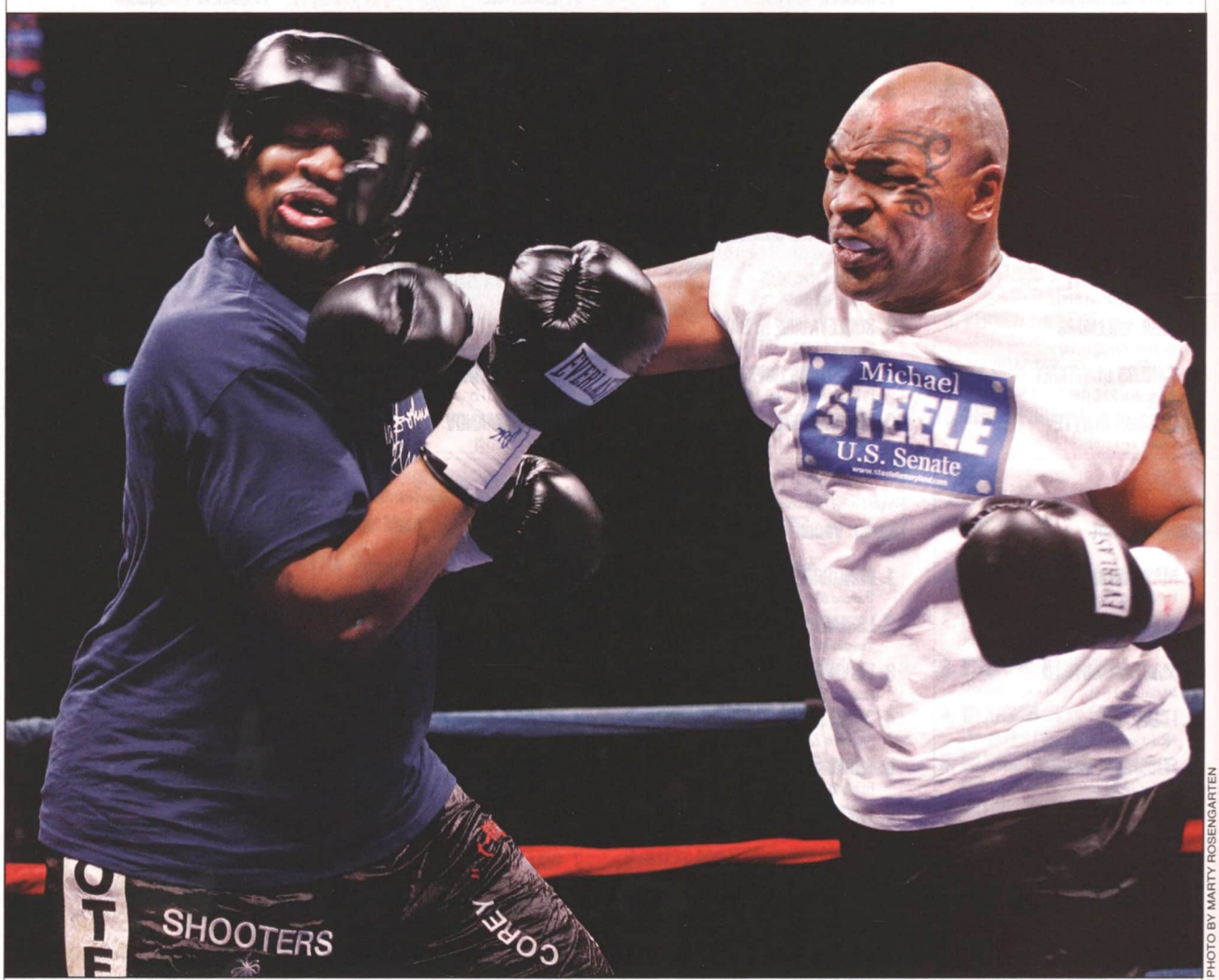


PHOTO BY MARTY ROSENGARTEN

Tyson's exhibition with Sanders was nowhere near as exciting as this photo implies

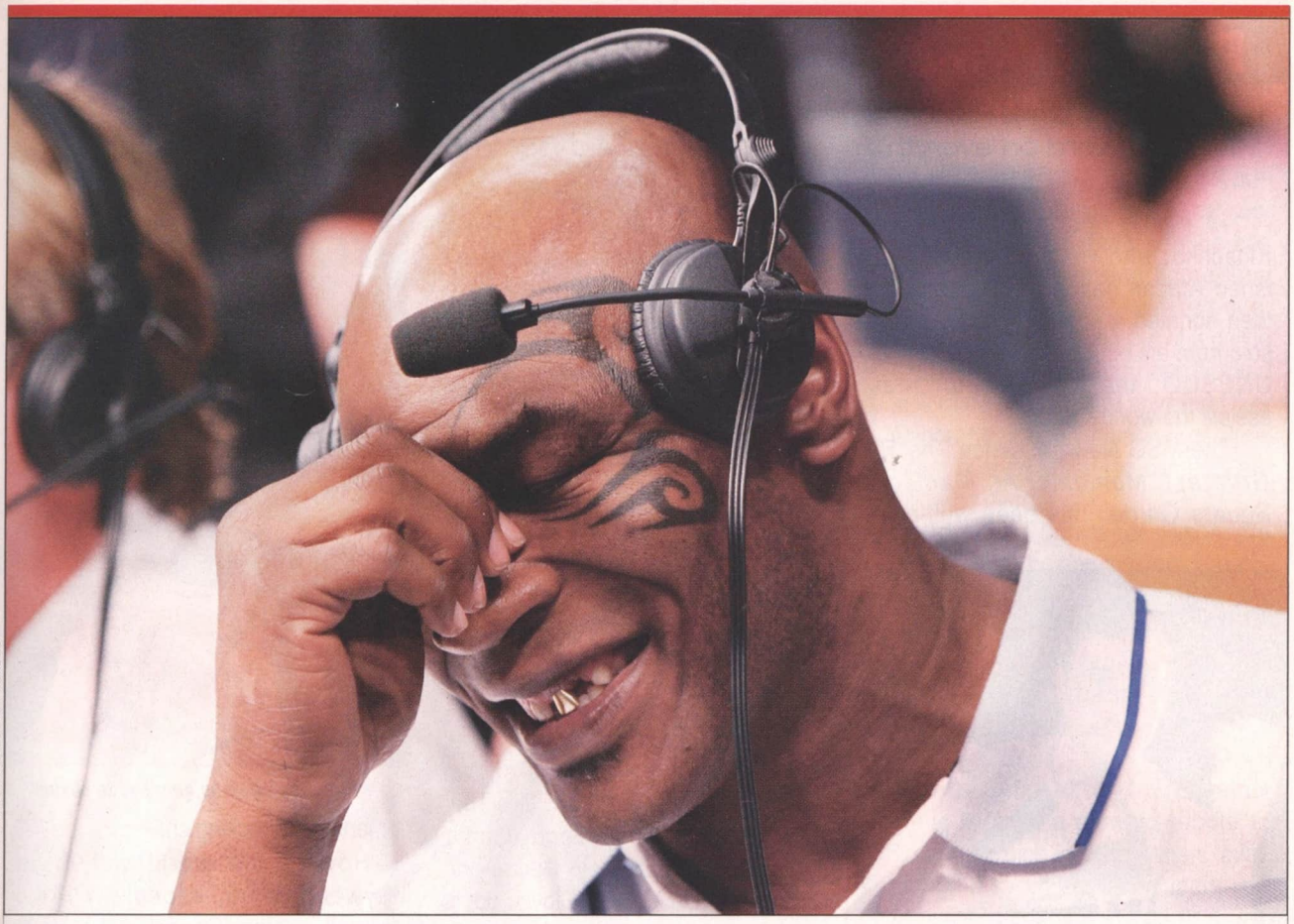


PHOTO BY ETHAN MILLER/GETTY IMAGES

Maybe Mike could get serious about broadcasting

No sooner had Tyson turned the Sweet Science into roller derby for a night, than we learned that our favorite ex-con ex-champ was considering adding both a female and a 66-year-old entertainer, singing legend Tom Jones, to his list of future Tour rivals. (We'll know Tyson has completely lost his intimidating aura if a cocky Jones goes nose-to-nose with him during the prefight introductions and asks, "What's new, pussycat?") The moment this news crossed my desk was the exact moment it became clear to me that Tyson needs to stop this silliness and put me to work as his career counselor right away.

Seriously, there are a whole lot of better ways for a guy who blew and estimated $300-million to make a living in his 40s. Allow me to suggest a few new careers:

•Television analyst: This is an obvious option, and Tyson even has a little experience at it. He worked the international broadcast of Oleg Maskaev-Hasim Rahman II this past August and a Showtime telecast several years ago, and has dropped in on numerous other shows through the years for some impromptu chitchat. Tyson is opinionated, his ring resume establishes him as a true expert, and he has a good grasp of boxing history. The problem is finding an opening at someone's broadcast table.

Tyson isn't taking Teddy Atlas' spot at ESPN2, he's burned bridges at HBO, and he has a sour relationship with Don King, who supplies so many of Showtime's main events. That leaves "Kid Dyno-mic" without a high-profile workplace. Regardless, he, like Bernard Hopkins, seems like a natural for the job, and it wouldn't hurt him to spend some free time polishing his camera presence, improving his voice, and doing his homework. If someone of Tyson's stature shows he's serious about embracing the craft, opportunity might have a way of materializing out of nowhere.

Is a return to WWE in Tyson's future?

Personal Perceptions:

The last word on everything from an open heart to an open vault:

•A hearty hooray for Wladimir Klitschko, who visited the impoverished African nation of Namibia and then donated a portion of every ticket sold from his bout with Calvin Brock to UNESCO, the organization that assists the world's poor.

•The MSG Network series *The 50 Greatest Moments At Madison Square Garden* has been well-produced and very entertaining, even if some of the moments selected don't deserve to make the cut. (As we went to press, the complete rankings had yet to be revealed.) Of course, had it been *my* list, it would have consisted of a limping Willis Reed leading the Knicks to the NBA championship in 1970, the Rangers winning the Stanley Cup in '94, and 48 fight nights.

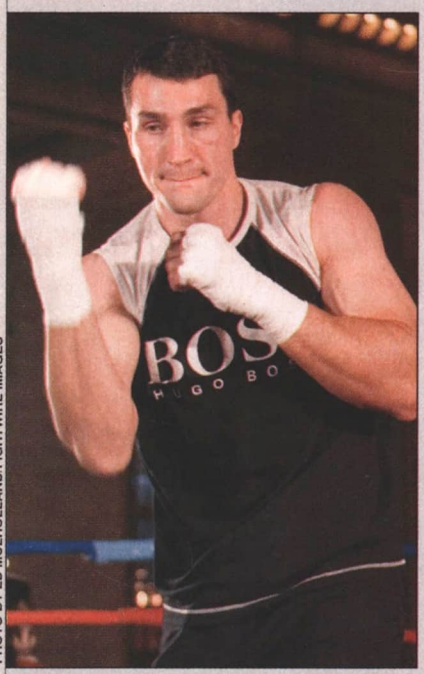


PHOTO BY ED MULHOLLAND/FIGHTWIRE IMAGES

Klitschko: Philanthropic fighter

•Speaking of the MSG Network, it has opened the film archives to provide more must-see TV in the form of *Golden Gloves Classics*, replays of spirited tournament battles of the '70s and '80s. Among the highlights: Young, hungry, unpolished versions of Zab Judah, Vivian Harris, Mark Breland, Howard Davis, Davey Moore, and a 160-pound Gerry Cooney. During one of Cooney's later Golden Gloves bouts at heavyweight, the commentary is provided by Floyd Patterson. Great stuff.

•If Hopkins seems a little stir crazy, that's only normal. It's hard enough for a boxer to stay away from the action after he's been beaten silly in his "finale," let alone for him to embrace retirement when he looked as good as "The Executioner" did in beating Antonio Tarver. No wonder Hopkins is eyeing Maskaev. And if Hopkins isn't content in the rocking chair ...

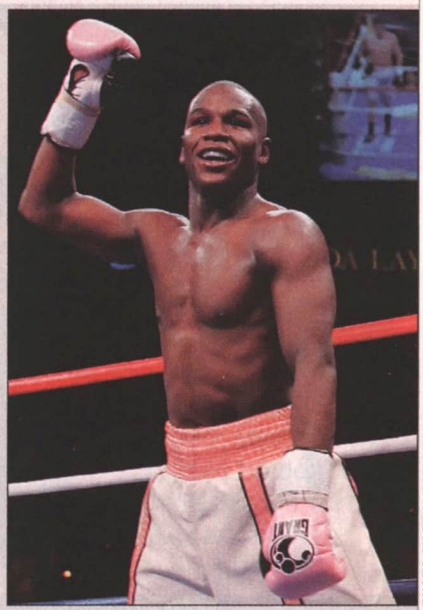


PHOTO BY ETHAN MILLER/GETTY IMAGES

Is "Pretty Boy" waving goodbye to boxing?

•How in the world will Floyd Mayweather be, especially if his farewell against Oscar De La Hoya turns out to be one of the finest showings of the "Pretty Boy's" career and he's still only 30 years old?

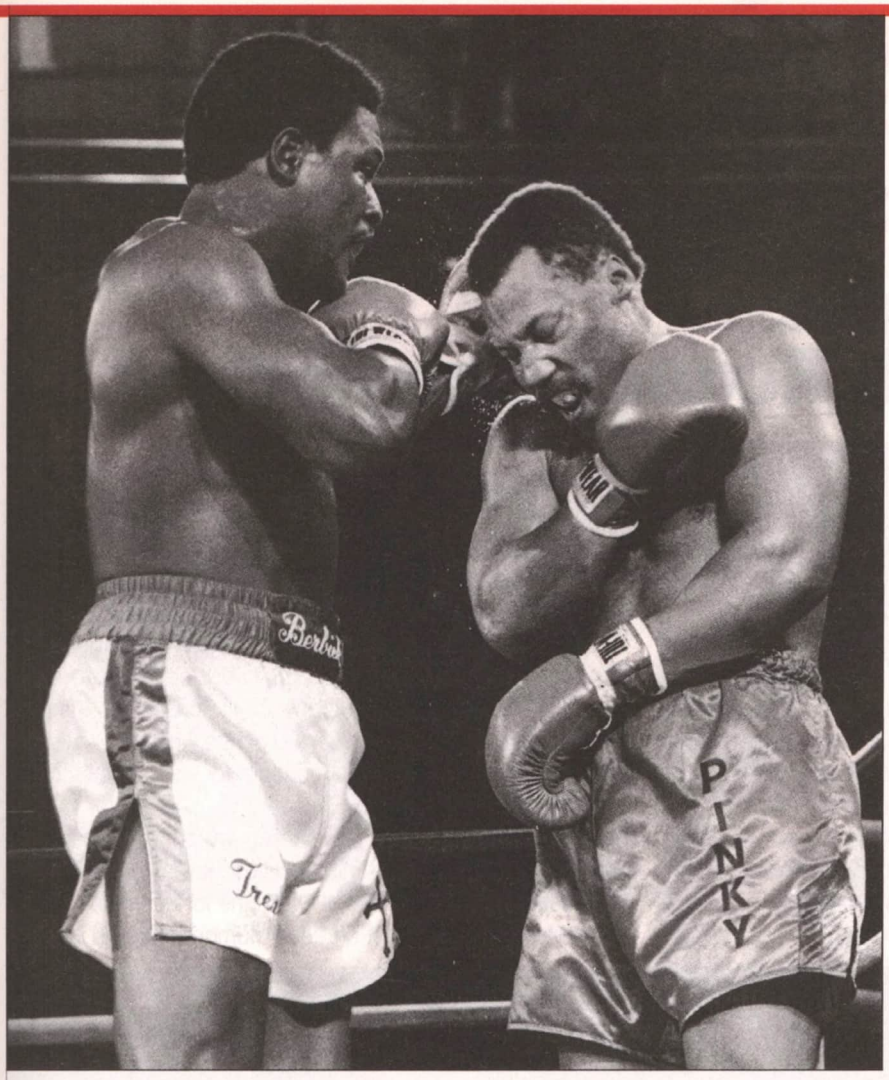
•Maybe Mayweather is talking retirement because he can't understand how someone can win a fight against a quality opponent, as he did vs. Carlos Baldomir, and still get booed. Hey, Pretty Boy, shake it off. Even Ali got booed.

•Trainer: What better way for Tyson to rehab the image and line the wallet than by rescuing some troublemaking kid like himself and eventually guiding him to a world title? The ex-champ knows what it takes to be a quality trainer. He was led by one of history's best (Cus D'Amato) and worst (Jay Bright). Suffice to say, he'd be sure not to use a balloon filled with water instead of an Enswell on his warrior's puffy eye.

Tyson, a tireless gym rat in his prime, would presumably run a rigid training facility. And while there's debate over whether or not a killer instinct can be taught, just imagine Tyson trying to instill one in his fighter regardless. It would be worth the cost of pay-per-view just to hear what the teacher, whose preflight froths included him once putting his fist through the dressing room wall, would say to get his pupil riled for combat.

•Referee: Granted, we're talking about someone who once bit off a piece of his foe's ear, tried to break another guy's arm, and pounded on more jewels in his career than a diamond cutter. Tyson sure would have to learn a few things about the rulebook. (For starter's that there *is* one.) But that's the point. He would *learn*.

History has shown us what happens when an ex-heavyweight king is given the job of third man in the ring just because of his name. Jersey Joe Walcott made a mess out of the ending of Muhammad Ali-Sonny Liston II, and Louis took too long to stop the Joe Frazier-Jerry Quarry rematch. If Tyson was taught by, say, a Richard



Berbick cracks Thomas en route to WBC heavyweight title

Steele, and dedicated himself to being the best he could be, he'd redefine the term, "no-nonsense referee," making a prime Mills Lane look as soft as Nathan Lane. If a scowling Tyson told two featherweights to break and take a step back, they'd probably retreat to separate sections of the upper deck.

•Rap artist: Thanks to the work of Roy Jones, the bar is already quite low when it comes to boxing rappers. Tyson should feel free to cut his own CD, though preferably under a different name so as to assure he'd get fair treatment from the music critics. My original suggestion was that Tyson name himself after the amount of money he currently has in his life savings, but the name, 50 Cent, is already taken.

•Pro wrestler: It's hard to believe Tyson isn't already WWE's highest paid attraction. Heck, the guy's a natural. He's nuts, he has a *facial* tattoo, he talks about eating people, he's done time in the slammer, he has a bad history with women, he threatens reporters, and he bites, butts, and fires cheap shots during combat. That's like a dozen wrestling angles rolled into one. The multiple personalities themselves could stage their own battle royal.

•Thespian: No, Mike, that's not a girl who likes another girl. It's an actor. True, you're no Marvin Hagler, Ray Mancini, or Carlos Palomino on the screen (not that they've exactly been mistaken for De Niro, Pacino, and Duvall). But, geez, if *Sonny Liston*, who had the acting range of a cinder block, could make a few bucks in front of a camera, you should be able to as well.

•Reality show: Let's not pretend otherwise. Tyson is a 12-car pileup in pants, and *that's* why he has remained a compelling figure long after his fistic skills have eroded. Admit it; Tyson coming out of a deli to discover that his car has been blocked in is more exciting than anything Ozzy Osbourne, Gene Simmons, or Paris Hilton ever do when the cameras are following them.

An added bonus for Tyson: No matter what boxing's living, breathing implosion does to make himself look stupid, he'll never be the most pathetic fool on reality television. That title has been retired by Danny Bonaduce.

Sad Departure: You're not going to read a glowing tribute to Trevor Berbick in this column, even though it saddened me to learn that he was murdered in October at the age of 52. The Jamaican was never a favorite of mine. In fact, he was part of that "Gridlock Gang"—Tony Tubbs, Tony Tucker, Tim Witherspoon, Greg Page, Pinklon Thomas, and Bonecrusher Smith—that epitomized the stagnation and boredom of the heavyweight division in the era that bridged the primes of Larry Holmes and Tyson.

What troubles me, though, is that a lot of casual fans remember Berbick only as the woozy guy who kept trying to rise from a knockdown suffered at the hands of Tyson and who, much to their amusement, kept falling back down. That's not fair to a fighter who won 50 of 62 bouts, captured a version of the heavyweight crown, beat four fighters who held a heavyweight title, was the only challenger to go the distance with Holmes in a 12-defense stretch, defeated Ali convincingly enough to get "The Greatest" to finally retire, and was one of the few men brave enough to stand and slug with Tyson, no matter how ill-advised that strategy proved to be. ■

By Ivan Goldman

Joe Calzaghe: The British Rodney Dangerfield

Joe Calzaghe's destruction of Jeff Lacy back in March 2006 was too effective. The better a fighter is, the worse he makes his opponents look, thereby creating, as Robert DeNiro's character told the young Matt Damon in *The Departed* (great flick, by the way), a paradox.

Unfortunately, colleague, friend, RING Senior Writer, and thering-online.com columnist Bill Dettloff is among those critics who've fallen into this old, old trap. I guess it can happen to anybody. An extraterrestrial-like mist floats among the boxing community, erasing the sweet smell of roses and daffodils and leaving only the stench of the manure. So like Rodney Dangerfield, some winners just can't get no respect. A classic example was Oscar De La Hoya's two-round destruction of Rafael Ruelas in 1995. All kinds of experts predicted a Ruelas victory, but after Oscar slapped him around like a party balloon, they called Ruelas a bum and De La Hoya a mediocrity.

So even Dettloff forgets that Jeff Lacy was considered an invincible punch-master before Calzaghe made him look like a nightclub bouncer. Well, Lacy's no walk in the park and will kick butt again if he can get his mojo back from the dry cleaners.

Calzaghe's latest opponent, Sako Bika, was a tough dude you can't hurt with a hammer, but, no, beating him didn't count either, along with Calzaghe's 41 other victories (and no defeats). That's because the same fighters who lose luster for overwhelming victories lose even more for winning their closer contests.

But allow me to ask why, when we respect Bernard Hopkins for fighting as a middleweight for so many years, we're supposed to think less of Calzaghe for daring to remain at super middle for almost an equal number of years instead

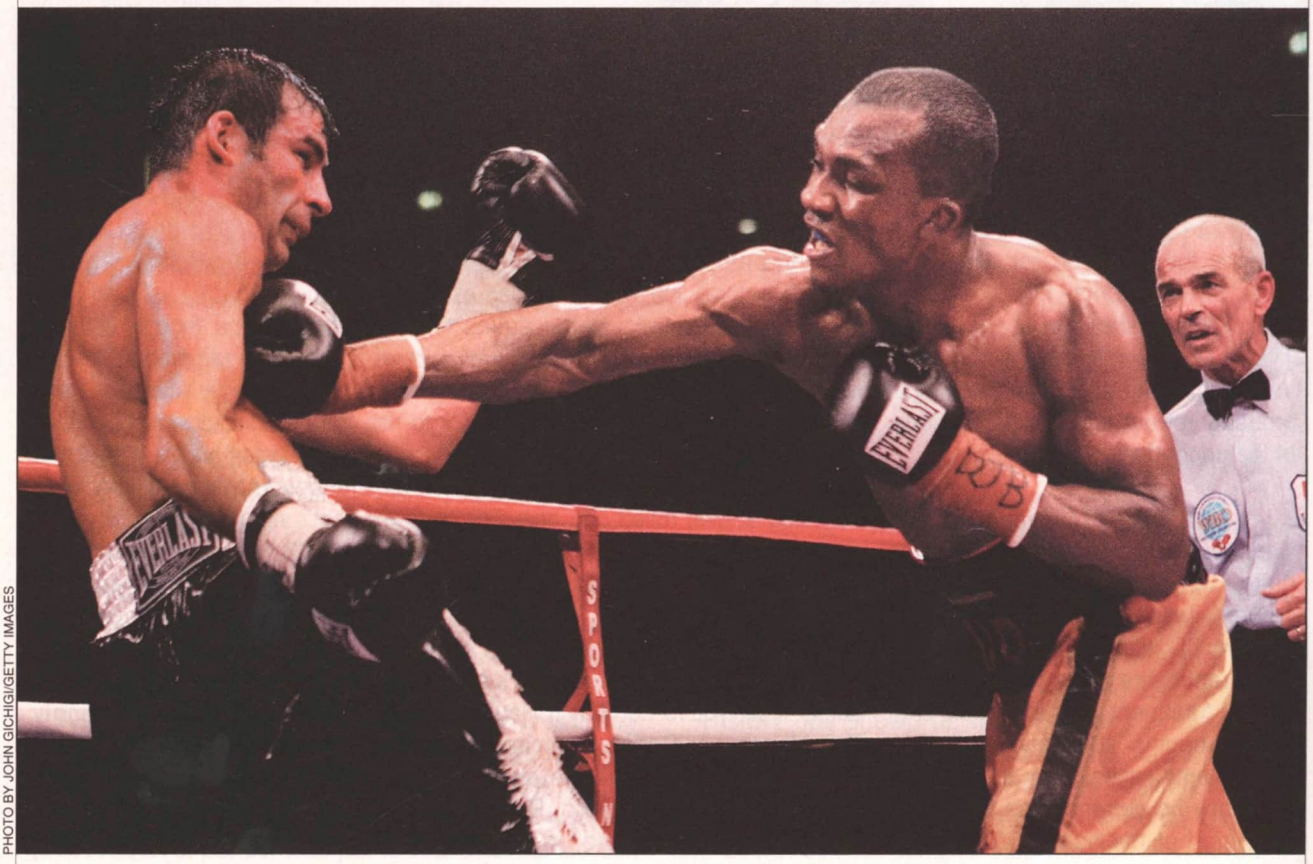


PHOTO BY JOHN GICHIGI/GETTY IMAGES

Bika proved a tough and hardheaded challenger for Calzaghe

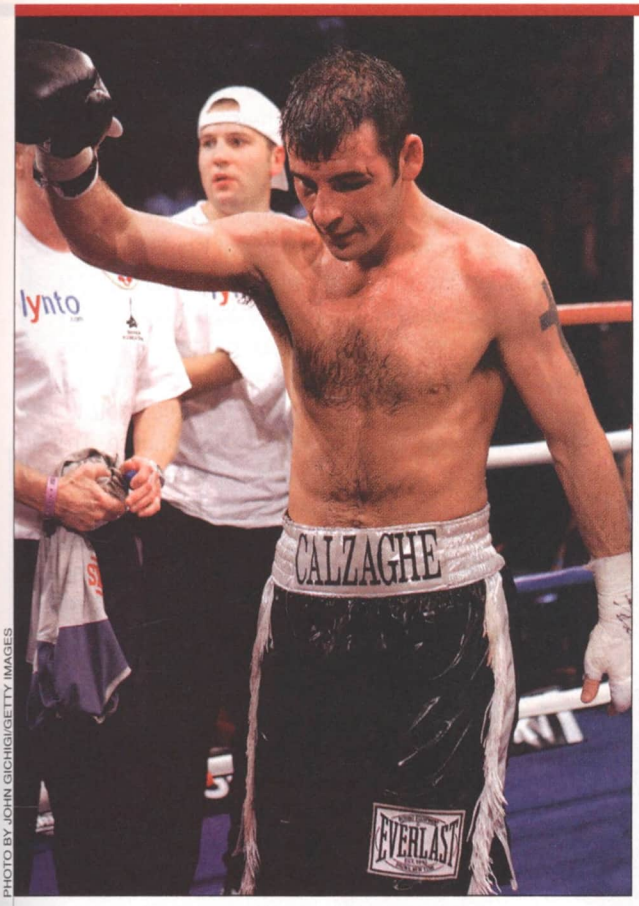


PHOTO BY JOHN GICHIGI/GETTY IMAGES

Calzaghe looks less than thrilled with his most recent performance

of moving up to light heavy? Ever notice when our troops won't surrender to overwhelming force—the Alamo, Bataan, Bastogne—they're heroes, but when the other guys hold out, they're fanatics?

Americans who've crossed the pond to fight Calzaghe have been handed their heads. Byron Mitchell, Charles Brewer, Omar Sheika, and others preceded Lacy, all with the same result. We know Calzaghe doesn't need to fight in the U.S., because he already makes plenty of money in Britain. Perhaps more important, he doesn't trust hometown officiating over here. Can you blame him? The biggest U.S. fights are supervised by commissions in Nevada, New York, New Jersey, and casino-controlled tribal commissions in Connecticut. This magazine has documented a lengthy string of horrific injustices perpetrated by seedy, reality-challenged individuals calling themselves officials in all those locales. Coming to the U.S. to compete in a fairly adjudicated boxing match is like going to Baghdad to kick back on vacation.

Sure, someday Calzaghe, now pushing 35, will lose. Bodies fade, wills wilt, youth triumphs. In their last outings, Johnny Tapia and Sugar Ray Leonard were kayoed by Sandro Marcos and Macho Camacho. But I think everyone understands Tapia and Leonard were the real thing. So is Calzaghe.

And just to show I harbor no ill will against Dettloff for his unforgivable failure to agree with everything I think, I hereby give a gratuitous plug to the splendid book he wrote with Joe Frazier, *Box Like the Pros*. It's full of great tips. Dettloff knows his stuff. Pay no attention to the rumor that he was once savagely beaten in a three-rounder against the junior bantam on a women's boxing club headquartered at a suburban senior citizens center. I could find no evidence to substantiate this persistent claim. Of course, I found no evidence to disprove it either.

ROCKY BALBOA: I entered the screening room at MGM headquarters in Hollywood expecting to see yet another *Rocky* film that wasn't as good as its predecessor. Instead,

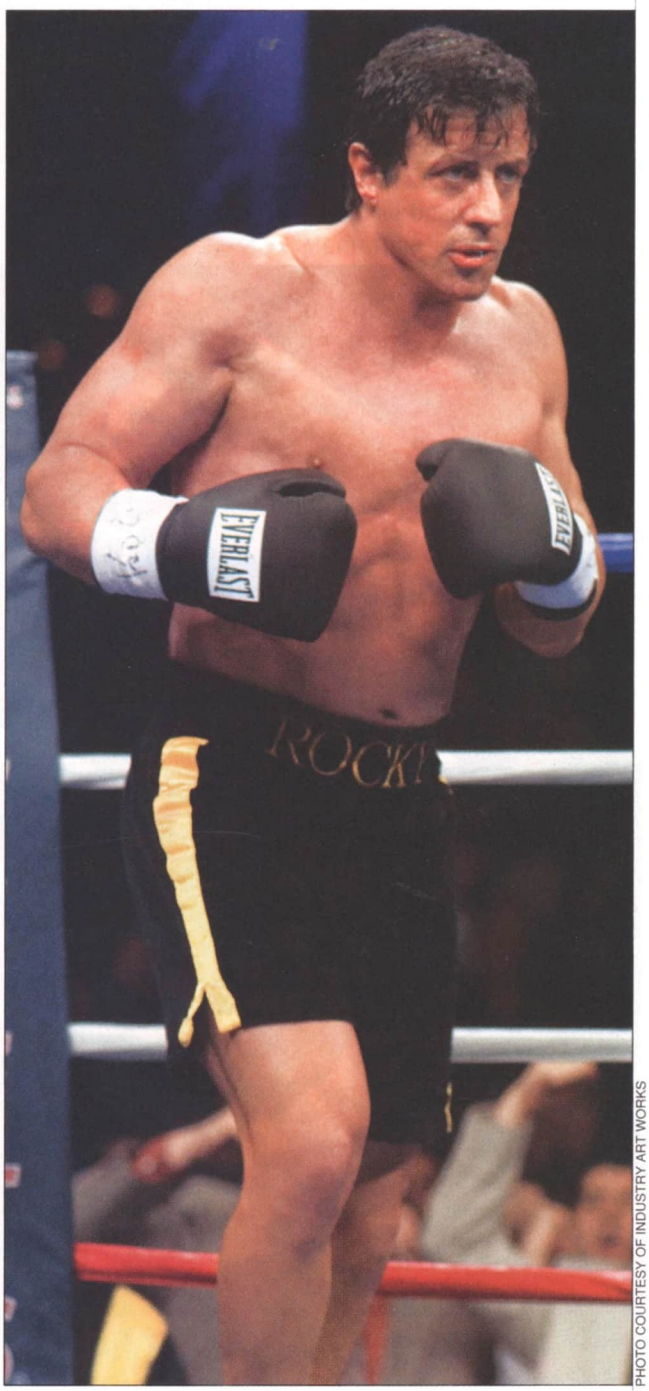


PHOTO COURTESY OF INDUSTRY ART WORKS

Goldman was pleasantly surprised by the new Rocky movie

I was hit by one of those shots you don't see coming. I enjoyed this film. If this sixth installment closes the curtain on the *Rocky* series, it was a nobler way to do it than Balboa's silly streetfight with the villainous character played by Tommy Morrison in the previous *Rocky* fable.

Sylevster Stallone, who wrote, directed, and starred, managed to create another lump in the throat that maybe wasn't as big as the 1976 original, but heck, the film was never boring, and that has to be the most important measure. Rocky and his new ragged entourage of people with problems may be a fairy tale, but they and opponent Mason Dixon, played by Antonio Tarver, managed to help each other in ways that rang true. Gimmicks were less obvious, Stallone allowed himself to look old and unglamorous, and the fight scenes were a little more realistic. I understand the Philadelphia scenes were even filmed in Philadelphia instead of Croatia or Slovakia. What a concept!

Max Kellerman, Larry Merchant, Jim Lampley, and Brian Kenny sound just as genuine discussing fictitious characters as they do when talking about real fighters on HBO and ESPN. That ought to be a good thing, but now they've got me wondering when they're when acting and when they aren't.

KERMIT WHO?: Steve Kim of maxboxing.com told a disturbing story of how the managers of Kermit Cintron and Mark Suarez got the runaround when they tried to get what looked like a worthwhile welterweight match televised.

One of the wonderful things about sports is that talent is so paramount, it actually exceeds the importance of connections. If a minor league baseball player can keep getting hits or striking out batters, some scout is going to notice. This tilt toward merit flies in the face of the way the rest of the world usually works. Because if you wanted to get into Yale, then you should have been born to a daddy who went there first.

But in boxing, the light of a talented fighter can remain a long time under a bushel. The fight business is more a reflection of the real world and its institutionalized corruption. Need

PHOTO COURTESY OF INDUSTRY ART WORKS

Strallone's fight scenes with Tarver are fairly realistic

PHOTO BY JAVIER CENTENO/FIGHT WIRE IMAGES

Cintron drills Suarez with a right en route to off-TV kayo victory

a bill passed? Write it up and send it on to your local congressman with a donation. Just don't put them in the same envelope and everything's cool.

So now it seems Cintron, after losing one fight to the formidable Antonio Margarito, can't get his manager's phone calls returned. Instead he should have received credit for taking that fight and putting on a show. It's amazing what lengths managers will go to in order to prevent a showdown with the brutally efficient Margarito. They act like the guy's got smallpox. He's the invisible welterweight.

Which brings us back to Cintron. His manager says an HBO date was dangled before him, but to get through to the network he had to get past promoter Lou DiBella, who apparently learned the word "options" at Harvard Law School and still can't get the word out of his head.

Cintron vs. Suarez came about because the IBF found itself with an empty title after a series of ridiculous events that make my head hurt and made them conclude that the winner of Floyd Mayweather vs. Carlos Baldomir couldn't possibly be welterweight champion of the world. So Cintron and Suarez ponied up the alphabet ransom, but were frozen off the TV screen anyway. As for Margarito, he was ineligible for the IBF party because he holds another alphabet belt. Check for logic in that policy.

It's not always easy to sort out claims and counterclaims when fighters, managers, promoters, and networks can't put together a deal, but it's pretty clear Cintron, Suarez, and their handlers would have preferred fighting on a network for a bigger purse.

Someday, some fighter will test promoters' demands for fight options against the wording of the Muhammad Ali Boxing Reform Act, which prohibits demanding options in exchange for a title shot. But it won't be easy because the law neither established nor even stipulated an enforcement body, so the fighter will have to file a civil suit and find a judge who can read.

Meanwhile, maxboxing.com stepped into the breach and placed Cintron-Suarez on a computer stream priced at $9.95. I'm told it was an excellent match until Suarez was finally beaten into submission in round five. I might have spent the sawbuck, but the computerized presentation was done almost at the last minute, and I had a previous engagement.

Anyone who thinks the Internet journalists of maxboxing.com crossed an ethical line by presenting the match must explain why it's any different from Fox or ESPN broadcasting an NFL game and discussing it in their sports summaries.

Meanwhile, fighters like Cintron and Suarez get my heartfelt sympathy and hope for better days to come. ■

PHOTO BY DUANE LONG

Cintron-Suarez was picked up by Maxboxing.com

[Camera Clicks]

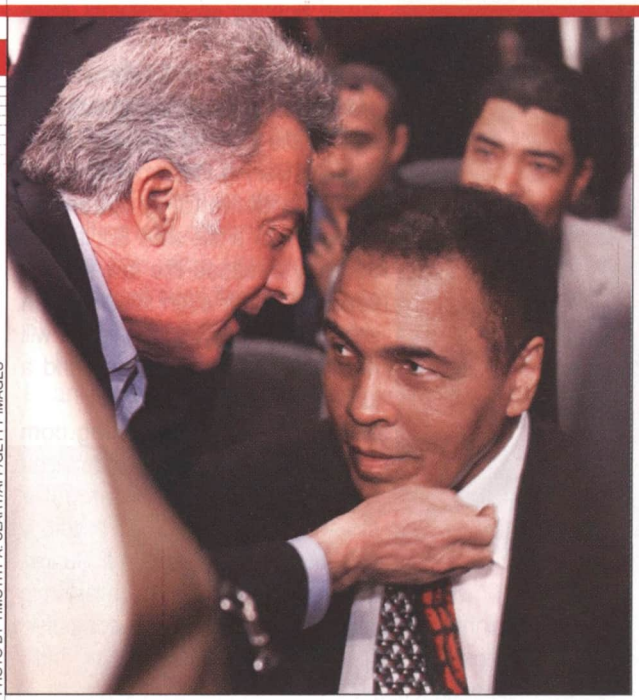


PHOTO BY TIMOTHY A. CLARY/AFP/GETTY IMAGES

If only it was Al Pacino and not Dustin Hoffman in this picture, then the "I know it was you, Fredo ... you broke my heart" joke would have worked perfectly. Oh well. Legendary actor Hoffman and "The Greatest" himself, Muhammad Ali, met up at Madison Square Garden in November, where Ali was on hand to watch his daughter Laila in action. No truth to the rumor that "Tootsie" will be Laila's next opponent.

PHOTO BY JAN SANDERS

If Brazilian bullrider Adriano Moraes confused Carlos Baldomir for the bull he was going to be riding later, we fully understand why he might make that mistake. Baldomir is a snort-and-chug-forward kind of guy, a bull in human skin who normally gores his opponents—but not when he's fighting a matador like Floyd Mayweather. By the way, is anybody else as amazed as us that they found a cowboy hat that could fit around Baldomir's massive noggin?

PHOTO BY CHRISTOF KOEPSEL/BONGARTS/GETTY IMAGES

Why is it that a tactically fought boxing contest is sometimes referred to as a "chess match," but a recklessly contested game of chess is never referred to as a "boxing match"? And while we're asking rhetorical questions, what's the deal with all of the best heavyweights of the last few years loving chess so much? During the last weeks of his training camp for his fight with Calvin Brock, number-one-rated heavyweight Wladimir Klitschko matched moves against his manager, Bernd Boente. One good thing about chess: The loser doesn't usually end up facedown on the floor.

PHOTO BY PAT ORR

Apparently, Ricky Hatton didn't look enough like a fighter for Carmen Basilio's liking. In this moment from Basilio's new reality-TV show Extreme Boxing Makeover, *Basilio gives the reigning junior welterweight champ a rhinoplastic adjustment, with the old "eye that looks like a plum" treatment to follow.*

PHOTO BY MIKE GREENHILL

Back in the 1970s, when Roberto Duran was the world's most feared lightweight and Joe Frazier was establishing himself as an all-time great heavyweight, did you ever think that one day Duran would have Smokin' Joe outweighed? And believe us, it's not because Frazier has been dieting. The two boxing legends met up recently at a black-tie gala, where they mugged for the cameras and chewed the fat—and no, that's not meant to be another joke at Duran's expense.

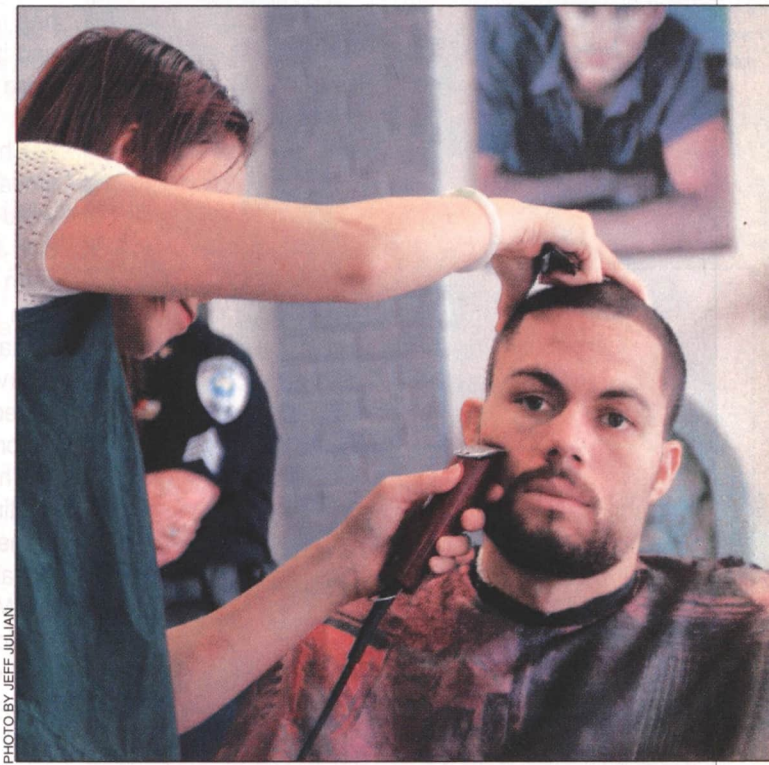


PHOTO BY JEFF JULIAN

Against Antonio Margarito, Kermit Cintron didn't seem to have much of a beard, but the evidence in this photo suggests otherwise. In fact, the IBF welterweight titlist had a little too much of a beard, hence his visit to the barber shop for a quick trim.

By Joe Santoliquito

Julio Cesar Garcia Welterweight

The trucks would come by spraying dirt and pebbles on Julio Cesar Garcia's tiny face. He'd wince, wave away the dust, and keep on packing the wooden crates of fruit, one after another. Some days, Garcia might get lucky and bring home $100. Other days, he could toil under the scorching Ciudad Acuña, Mexico, sun for eight hours and make maybe $10.

Good money for an eight-year-old.

His family's home had dirt floors. They scrambled and scratched for anything they could get. Yet the one hope, the one thing in his life that always produced a smile was when his older brother, Antonio, would look at Julio's tired eyes and ask, "You want to go to the gym with me?"

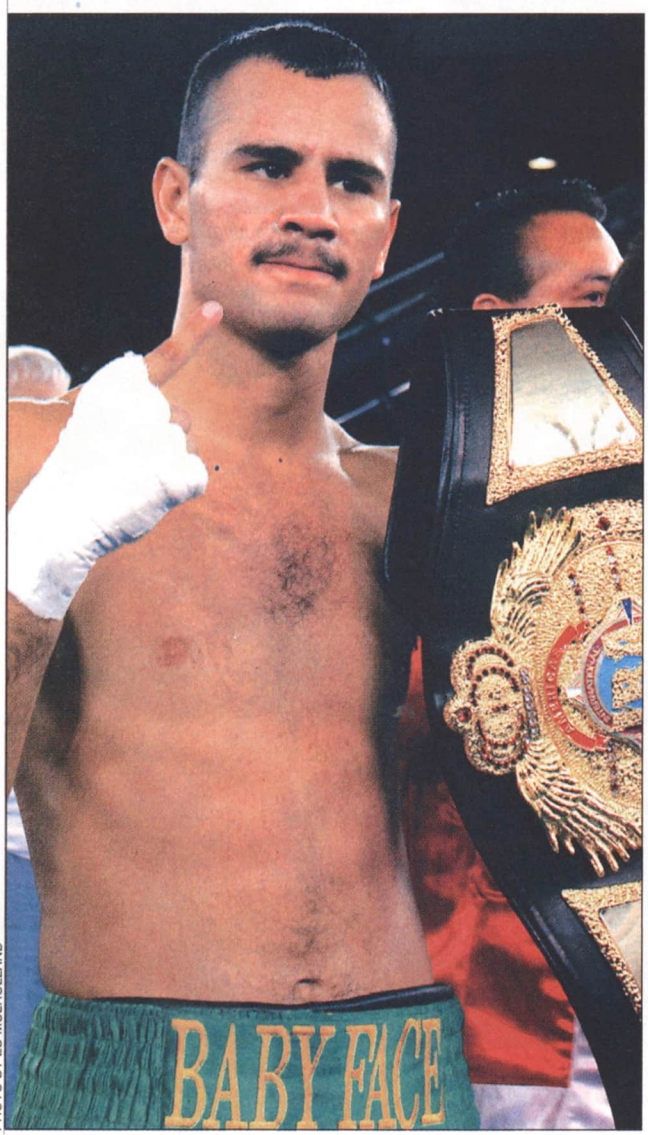


PHOTO BY ED MULHOLLAND

That's what always jolted loose the lethargy. Young Julio would spring to his feet and be ready to go. The bond Garcia forged with boxing at an early age is still there. It's the reason he eschewed the normal development of a fighter in the United States, or most places in the world for that matter, to turn pro at 15. It's the reason why he gets antsy after a few months without a fight.

The 6' welterweight already has a 39-2 (33) professional record. *That's 41 fights. And he's 19.* That's one less fight than Oscar De La Hoya has had in his entire career, and it's more fights than world welterweight champion Floyd Mayweather has had, and almost two-times as many fights as world middleweight champion Jermain Taylor.

In Mexico, it's common practice for boxers to start early. Julio Cesar Chavez had not quite turned 18 when he made his pro debut. Marco Antonio Barrera was also 15 when he had his first pro fight. Barrera, however, had 28 pro fights by the time he was 19; Chavez had 22. Neither future Hall of Famer even approached 41 fights until well into their professional careers. It is one area Garcia has already topped the two Mexican icons.

Now Garcia is working on fulfilling the rest.

"I do want to make history, that's my goal," said Garcia, through interpreter Luis DeCubas Jr. "All I can think about is everyone in Mexico praising me. I want to be better than Julio Cesar Chavez, and the only way to do that is to knock everyone's head off."

(Continued on Page 121)

Pro Record

2002		
April 26	Hector Salazar, Ciudad Acuña, Mexico	W 4
July 19	Joaquin Quintana, Ciudad Acuña	KO 1
Sept. 6	Jaime Ovalle, Ciudad Acuña	KO 1
Oct. 15	Juan Antonio Medrano, Ciudad Acuña	KO 1
Oct. 25	Rudy Ortega, Ciudad Acuña	KO 1
Nov. 8	Pedro Estrada, Ciudad Acuña	KO 3
Nov. 29	Orlando Campos, Frontera, Mexico	L 8
2003		
Jan. 1	Jesus Garcia, Gómez Palacio, Mexico	W 6
Feb. 7	Daniel Quintero, Ciudad Acuña	KO 1
Feb. 21	Guadalupe Arce, Ciudad Acuña	KO 2
March 21	Pedro Flores, Ciudad Acuña	KO 5
April 25	Manuel Castro, Ciudad Acuña	KO 1
May 16	Arturo Lopez, Ciudad Acuña	W 8
June 20	Ramon Valles, Ciudad Acuña	KO 1
Aug. 1	Carlos Garcia, Gómez Palacio	KO 7
Sept. 5	Orlando Campos, Ciudad Acuña	KO 2
Oct. 17	Isidro Salinas, Ciudad Acuña	KO 7
Oct. 31	Israel Sotelo, Ciudad Acuña	W 8
Nov. 20	Juan Ruiz, Gómez Palacio	KO 3
2004		
Jan. 1	Oscar Galindo, Gómez Palacio	W 10
Feb. 27	Oscar Tinajero, Ciudad Acuña	KO 12
April 16	Javier Narvaez, Ciudad Acuña	KO 3
May 15	Victor Dominguez, La Paz, Mexico	KO 11
July 3	Fernando Gonzalez, Ciudad Acuña	KO 1
Aug. 14	Jorge Martinez, La Paz	KO 11
Oct. 30	Andres Gonzalez, Gómez Palacio	KO 2
Dec. 3	Raymundo Gonzalez, La Paz	KO 9
2005		
Jan. 1	Manuel Castro, Torreón, Mexico	KO 1
Jan. 21	Larry Gonzales, Houston, TX	L 8
April 8	Luis Fuente, Houston	KO 9
May 14	Alvaro Aguilar, La Paz	W 12
July 30	Hilario Lopez, La Paz	KO 1
Aug. 19	David Montes, Gómez Palacio	KO 2
Sept. 16	Reggie Nash, Piedras Negras, Mexico	KO 1
Oct. 29	Raymundo Gonzalez, La Paz	KO 5
Dec. 9	Moises Pedroza, Bronx, NY	KO 2
2006		
Feb. 17	Omar Bernal, Ciudad Acuña	KO 1
March 31	Verdell Smith, La Paz	KO 3
July 7	Grover Wiley, Phoenix, AZ	KO 2
Aug. 18	Alfonso Sanchez, Dallas, TX	KO 2
Sept. 29	Ernesto Zepeda, New York, NY	KO 3

FIGHTS	WON	LOST	DRAW	KOs
41	39	2	0	33

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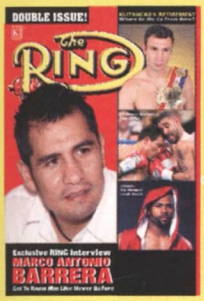

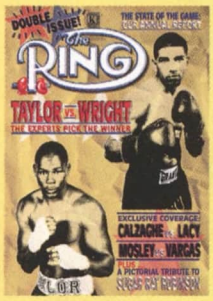

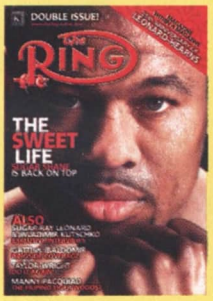

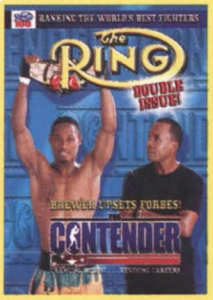

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After the fanfare with which Floyd Mayweather entered the Mandalay Bay ring (opposite page), he would have had to do a whole lot more against Carlos Baldomir to please the fans. After hearing the boos—and Larry Merchant's justifiable criticism—"Pretty Boy" break into tears at the post-fight press conference (above).

TOO MUCH *pretty* BOY, NOT ENOUGH *GRITTY* BOY?

New Welter King Mayweather Leaves Us Wondering If Perfection Is Enough

By Eric Raskin
PHOTOS BY ETHAN MILLER/GETTY IMAGES

Floyd Mayweather is not Arturo Gatti. Carlos Baldomir found that out the hard way on November 4. And so did the 9,427 fans who filed into the Mandalay Bay Events Center that evening and, in gradual waves, filed back out.

Mayweather is the best pound-for-pound fighter in boxing right now, a product of other-worldly pugilistic genetics mixed with other-worldly pugilistic breeding. He is boxing's answer to the Triple-Crown-winning racehorse, sired to be a champion, trained to be an all-time great. When Secretariat ran, it was not

GRANT

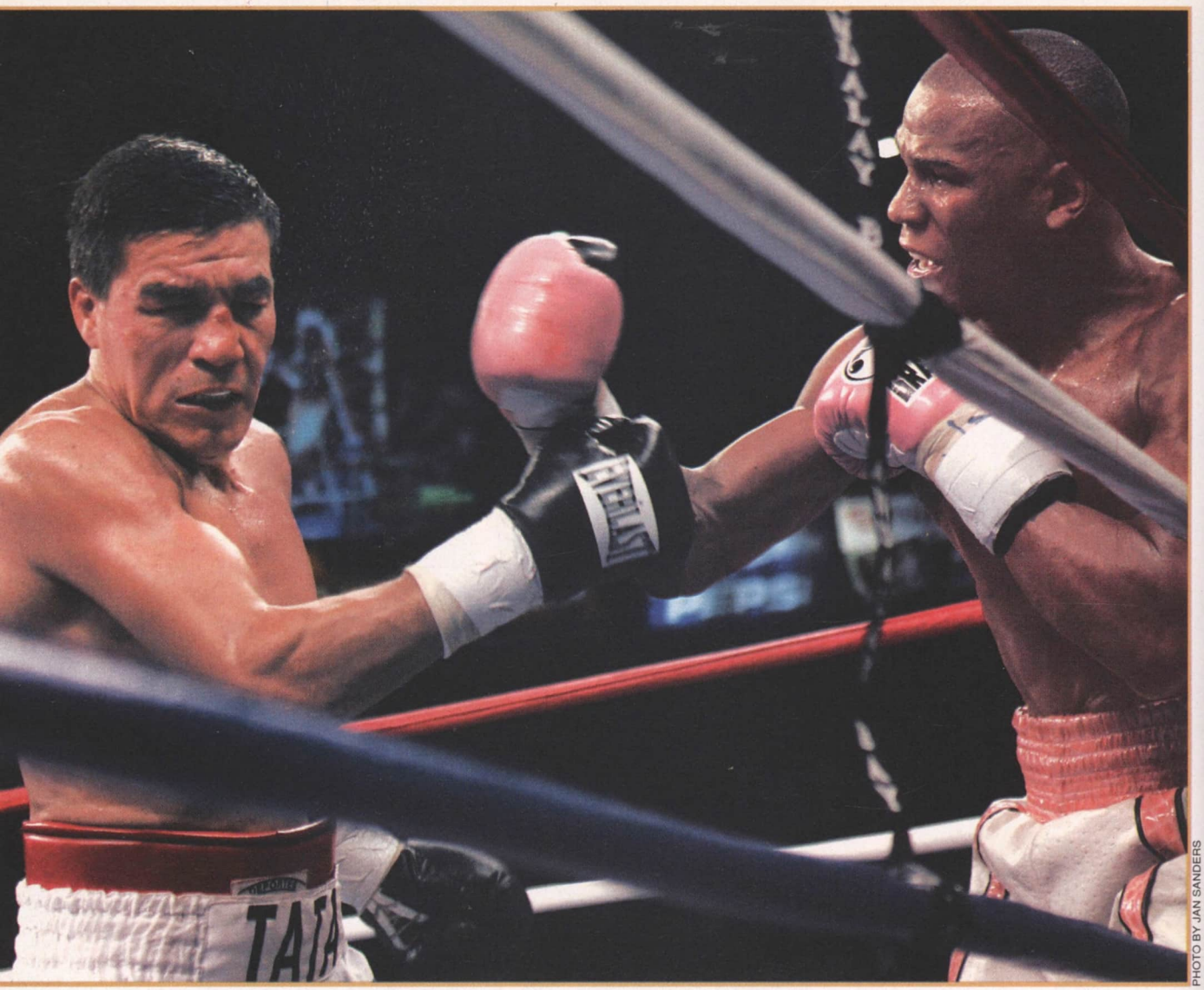


PHOTO BY JAN SANDERS

Mayweather lures Baldomir into a corner and unleashes a flurry, punctuated by this right hand. It was an effective strategy, as the challenger lost but one round on the scorecard of one judge.

his finishing position that made people talk; it was the distance between his tail and the next closest nose. As Mayweather showed against Baldomir, even undisputed world champions sometimes have trouble getting close enough to catch a whiff.

Truly, Mayweather is a marvel. He is a once-in-a-generation boxing artist. He is a special athlete.

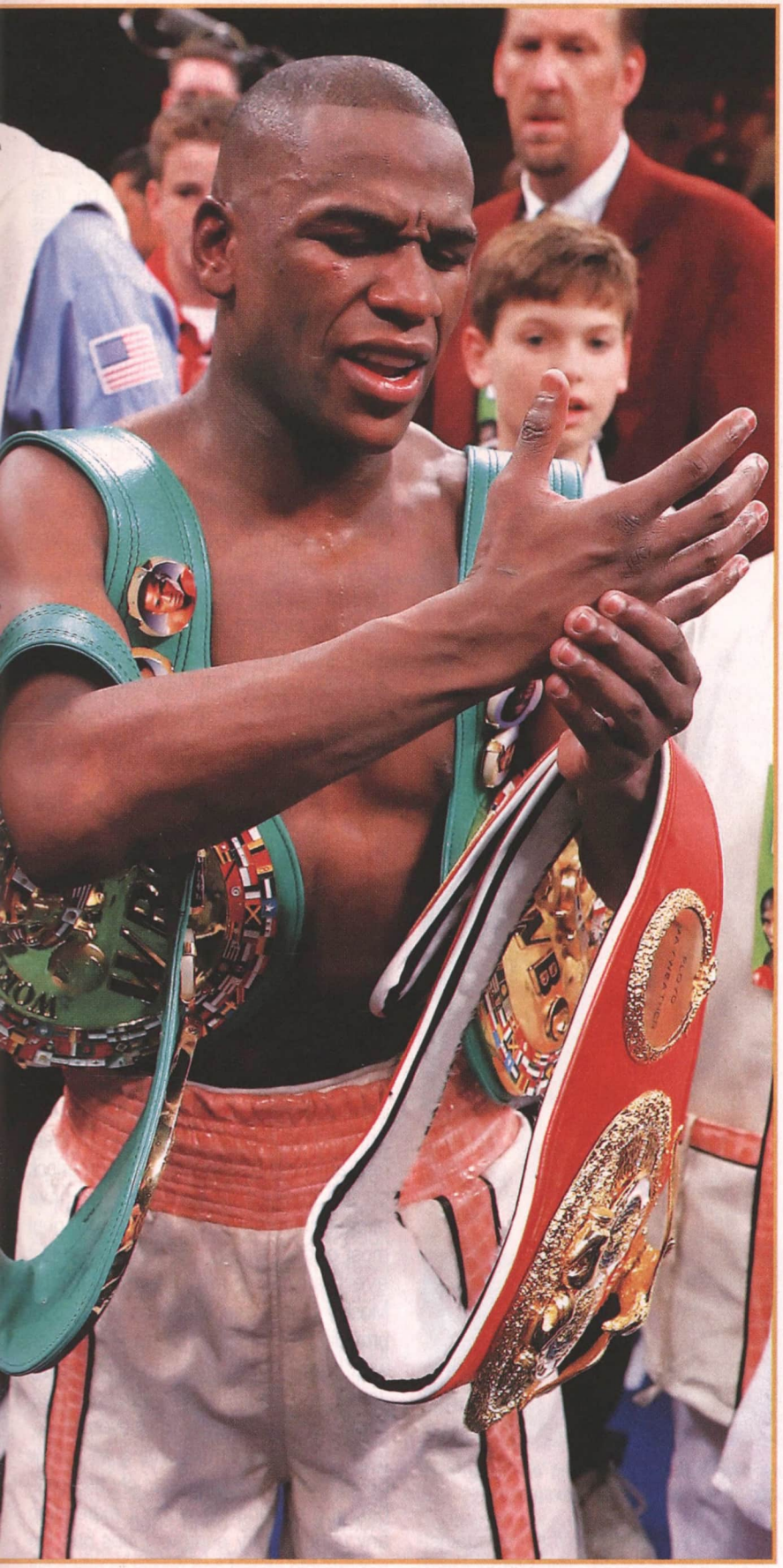
And he is, at times, a colossal bore.

The boos began drowning out all other forms of crowd noise in round 10 of the Baldomir fight. In round 11, fans were heading for the exits—and even with the numbers in the arena dwindling, the booing was getting louder. With 40 seconds to go in the 12th, it sounded like a Barry Bonds at-bat on the road. Mayweather was putting the finishing touches on a technically flawless fight, capturing the legitimate welterweight championship of the world by winning every round against a fighter who'd proven his quality by beating Zab Judah and Gatti earlier in the year, and rather than applauding in awe, celebs at ringside like Tiger Woods and Charles Barkley, were showing Mayweather their backs.

And Mayweather, in a sparring session with HBO's Larry Merchant after the fight that arguably upstaged the in-ring action, showed himself to be either deaf or in denial.

"My fans rooted me on," he insisted. "[Baldomir] fought his heart out, I fought my heart out, we put on a pleasing performance tonight." When Merchant pointed out that the sounds emanating from the mouths of the paying customers suggested otherwise, Mayweather took it as a personal attack. "You're hoping and wishing that I get beat," the new 147-pound champ asserted.

If indeed that's what Merchant wants—and clearly it isn't, he just wants an entertaining fight for the viewers—then he's probably out of luck. Mayweather, 37-0 (24), doesn't look like a fighter who's going to be getting beaten anytime soon. Are there potential opponents out there who are bigger threats than Baldomir was? Certainly. But the gap between "Pretty Boy Floyd" and the typical world-class contender is still vast, and you can count on one hand the number of pro



Mayweather fought with pain in his right hand from the sixth round on, and, after being declared world welterweight champion, Pretty Boy examines the damage. The question is, how much damage did this performance cause Mayweather's reputation?

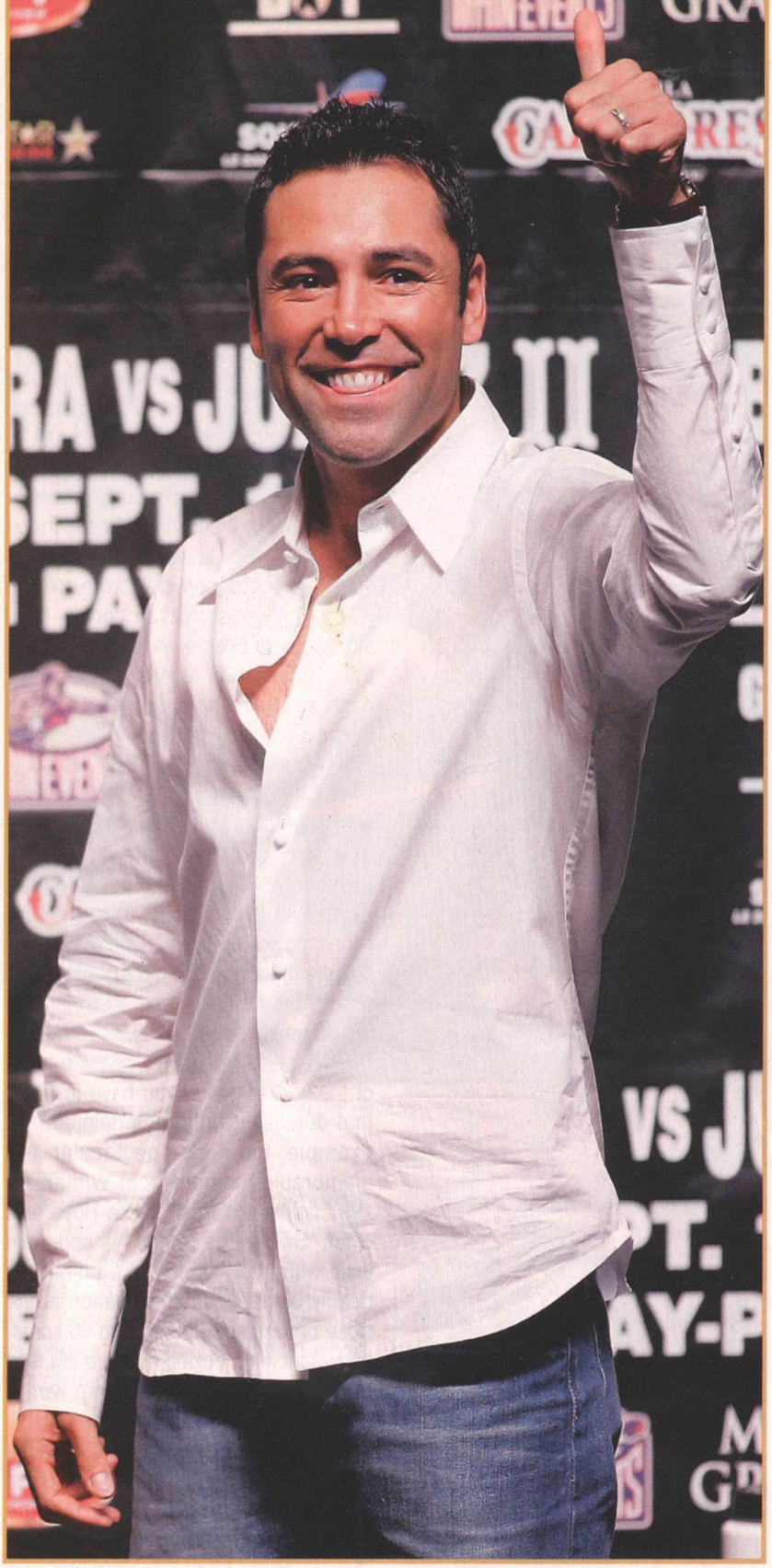
fights he's had that were remotely competitive.

"I would liken Mayweather to a really good sports franchise without that star performer who you're dying to see perform," HBO boxing analyst Max Kellerman analogized. "He's from the Detroit area, so let's say he's the Detroit Tigers. If you're a Tigers fan, and the Tigers are winning by a lot in the eighth inning, you might file out, because you're not there to see any particularly exciting performer, you're there just to see if the team wins. You might go to a Cavs game, and they're up 20 points in the fourth, but if LeBron James is in the game, no one's leaving, because he's such a spectacular performer. Even when Roy Jones was in boring, one-sided fights, people weren't leaving in the 11th and 12th rounds, because you might see something you've never seen before from Roy. But Mayweather's not that kind of performer."

No, if Mayweather is to be compared with a fellow recent pound-for-pound champ, it's becoming clear that, as a performer, he more closely resembles Pernell Whitaker. Especially as he continues moving up to less natural weights, Mayweather doesn't pack much kayo power, but he does have mesmerizing technique and dazzling defensive skills.

Here's the thing: Even if you're a fan of the wild sluggers, you have to admit that defense *can* be entertaining. For example, the most spectacular and memorable moment from Whitaker's 1997 fight with Oscar De La Hoya was when "Sweet Pea" made his opponent whiff with every punch of a potentially deadly eight-punch combination at the close of the fourth round. And 60-some-odd years later, boxing nuts are still talking about the time Willie Pep won a round without throwing a punch.

Mayweather had his share of those moments in the Baldomir fight—a fight in which, according to CompuBox, the defending champion landed in single digits in 11 of the 12 rounds. In round four, Mayweather's radar was locked on and he made the Argentine just barely miss with a series of right hands. At the beginning of the sixth, Baldomir moved Mayweather to the ropes and threw a flurry of punches, but the challenger



If Oscar De La Hoya and Mayweather have just one more fight before retiring, it's going to be against each other. Both men will earn eight-figure paydays for their May 5 encounter.

evaded them all; at the end of the same round, Mayweather dominated an exchange in which Baldomir just couldn't land anything clean. Early in the eighth, Mayweather had that Whitaker-against-De-La-Hoya moment, standing in a corner and doing a beautiful job of making Baldomir miss punch after punch.

But by then, we knew that, as the cliché goes, Baldomir couldn't hit Mayweather in the rear of his ostrich-skin trunks with a handful of salt. By midway through the fight, we knew there was nothing Baldomir could do to make it competitive. And from that point on, if he didn't want to hear boos, the onus was on Mayweather to complement his stellar defense with accelerated offense and knock his man out. HBO commentator Emanuel Steward observed in the late rounds that the great welterweights of Mayweather's childhood, Sugar Ray Leonard and Tommy Hearns, would have cranked it up and scored a knockout against someone they were dominating as easily as Baldomir. Mayweather didn't seem to care about producing such a result.

The fact that he injured his brittle right hand somewhere around the sixth round is probably partially to blame for that. But is it also possible that Mayweather somehow feels his title as pound-for-pound monarch entitles him to fighting in such a fashion? That certainly seems to be the trend over the last 15 years or so—ever since the P-4-P title has become more important to some elite fighters than any belts they can win in the ring.

Since the early-'90s, when Julio Cesar Chavez was removed from the P-4-P throne, the five fighters with more-or-less undisputed claims to that title have been Whitaker, Jones, Shane Mosley, Bernard Hopkins, and Mayweather. There were moments when some people recognized James Toney, De La Hoya, or Felix Trinidad as the best, but none of them had anything resembling a hammerlock on the title. Of the five who did have almost universal recognition, four spent most of their time on top winning almost every single round of boring fights. Mosley is the lone exception in terms of providing excitement, but his P-4-P reign was brief—not to mention disputed by Jones and Trinidad fans. Whitaker was content to box his way to uneventful victories. Hopkins liked fighting at a slow pace, making his fights as ugly as possible, and dominating without expending any unnecessary energy. Jones had the remarkable speed and power to make his one-sided beatings of unworthy foes fun for a few rounds, but they tended to grow

extremely tedious as he carried opponents across the finish line.

And that's what Mayweather's bout with Baldomir felt like. It was fun for maybe six rounds or so, watching him do things only a handful of fighters in history were capable of doing, but without that push to finish off an opponent who seemed perfectly willing to be finished off, it grew terribly boring over the final few rounds. Hence the boos. And the premature evacuation.

Are fighters using the pound-for-pound title as an excuse to be boring? Is it about winning every round with P-4-P dominance, and if the fans don't like it, too bad? Does the pound-for-pound leader owe the sport more than that?

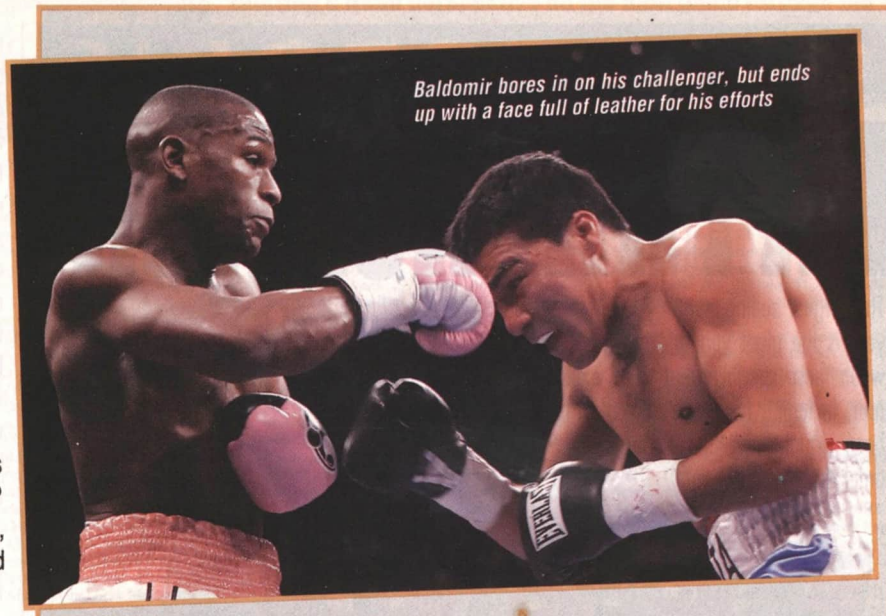
Certainly, for a fighter like Mayweather, who has never quite crossed over to the mainstream—as the middle-of-the-road pay-per-view numbers for this fight, estimated at 325,000 buys, bear out—an exciting performance could have pushed him closer to true superstardom. And we know he has it in him; his fight five years ago against Diego Corrales was one-sided like the Baldomir fight, but Pretty Boy gradually upped his attack, scored five knockdowns, and got the knockout win before anybody had a chance to criticize or boo. He boxed beautifully, and then he finished the show. Against Baldomir, he boxed beautifully. End of sentence.

Or, to quote Merchant in the ninth round, "It's a wonderful exhibition, but where's the drama?"

The drama came at the postfight press conference, when Mayweather caught everyone off-guard by declaring, "All I have is one more fight, and that's it." His emotions immediately overtook him, and he turned away from the crowd for a few moments, covered his face, and cried.

"I've been saying this for a while, but nobody wanted to believe me," he eventually continued. "I actually thought about quitting from this sport after the Zab Judah fight, but this is it. I'm doing only one more fight and then I am walking away ... I don't need boxing anymore and I don't need money anymore."

The "one more fight" is, of course, a pay-per-view superfight on May 5 against De La Hoya, which will earn



Baldomir bores in on his challenger, but ends up with a face full of leather for his efforts

COMPLETE AND TATA DOMINATION

In January and July of 2006, the glass slipper fit for Carlos Baldomir. But in November, the punch slipper gave him fits. Floyd Mayweather's speed and defense pitted against Baldomir's plodding predictability made for a wholly one-sided fight and brought to an end Baldomir's unlikely reign as world welterweight champion in his second defense.

The best punch of the entire fight for Baldomir, 147, Santa Fe, Argentina, came early in the first round, when he landed a straight right hand square on the chin of Mayweather, 146, Grand Rapids, Michigan. By the end of the round, however, the 35-year-old Baldomir was cut on the bridge of his nose and over his left eye, and Mayweather had fought back well enough with quick left hooks to take the round. That left hook carried the second for the 29-year-old challenger, and in the third he was jumping in successfully with his straight right-hand lead. The fourth may have been Baldomir's best round, as he applied enough pressure to convince judge Paul Smith to give him 10 points, though Mayweather still landed the best punch, a nice right uppercut.

Beginning in the fifth round, frustration really seemed to set in for Baldomir, who could neither land anything significant nor avoid Mayweather's right hand. Mayweather was simply in the zone, and though his offense consisted of potshots rather than combinations, he was picking the Argentine apart bit by bit throughout the middle rounds. Even after Pretty Boy injured his right hand during round six, he continued to cruise behind a one-handed offense.

But in the 10th, he began cruising a bit too much for the fans' liking. Mayweather was on his bicycle in the 11th, almost giving away the round before rallying late with a couple of counter left hooks and a nice right to the body, preserving his chance for a shutout. Nothing changed in the 12th, and when the scorecards were added up, two judges, Chuck Giampa (USA) and John Keane (England), gave Mayweather credit for that shutout, 120-108, while judge Smith (USA) had it 118-110. The Ring had it a clean sweep, 120-108, for Mayweather, who was credited with landing an impressive 43 percent of his punches, as compared to only 12 percent for Baldomir. The referee was Jay Nady (USA).

"I couldn't catch him, and when I would catch him, I would feel sluggish and without any strength," Baldomir, 43-10-6 (13), said afterward.

Mayweather put it in more concise terms: "It was a cakewalk, if you want to know the truth."

—E.R.

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Mayweather somewhere upward of $10-million, not to mention possibly giving him his defining win against a fellow future first-ballot Hall of Famer. Maybe the retirement-to-come announcement was some sort of negotiating tactic to help encourage "The Golden Boy" and HBO to hurry up and make the fight. If so, it worked, as the fight was signed just nine days later. But maybe we should take it at face value; maybe it really is how Mayweather intends to end his career, still in perfect health just a few months after his 30th birthday.

"So far, he's made good on what he's said he'd do throughout his career," Kellerman noted. "Do I think that he might walk away for a while after the Oscar fight? Sure. Permanently? There's nothing he can do in his life that will generate the kind of payday that he'll be able to generate with boxing. It's not that I doubt he'll retire. If he says that, there's a good chance I think he does. But to stay retired? I just don't see it. It's just too tempting to come out."

Mayweather has saddled himself in recent months with outrageous expectations, saying he's the greatest fighter who ever lived, name-dropping the likes of Sugar Ray Robinson and Muhammad Ali among those he's surpassed. If he retires after one more fight, even if it's a sensational destruction of fellow great De La Hoya, he won't be giving himself an opportunity to surpass them—not to mention the 20 or 30 (or more) other legendary fighters to whom he shouldn't dare compare himself.

He can choose one or the other, but he can't have both: Either he fights on for several more years, adds several huge names to a resume that doesn't yet have a single sure-shot Hall of Famer on it and earns the right to put himself in the "greatest of all-time" discussion, or he retires young and on top, something very few of the greats—including Robinson and Ali—were able to do.

At the very least, he does need to have that one more fight he's promised us. He can't pull out of the fight with De La Hoya and retire right now. And all he has to do is watch the last three rounds of his fight with Baldomir, close his eyes, and listen to the crowd to know why. ■

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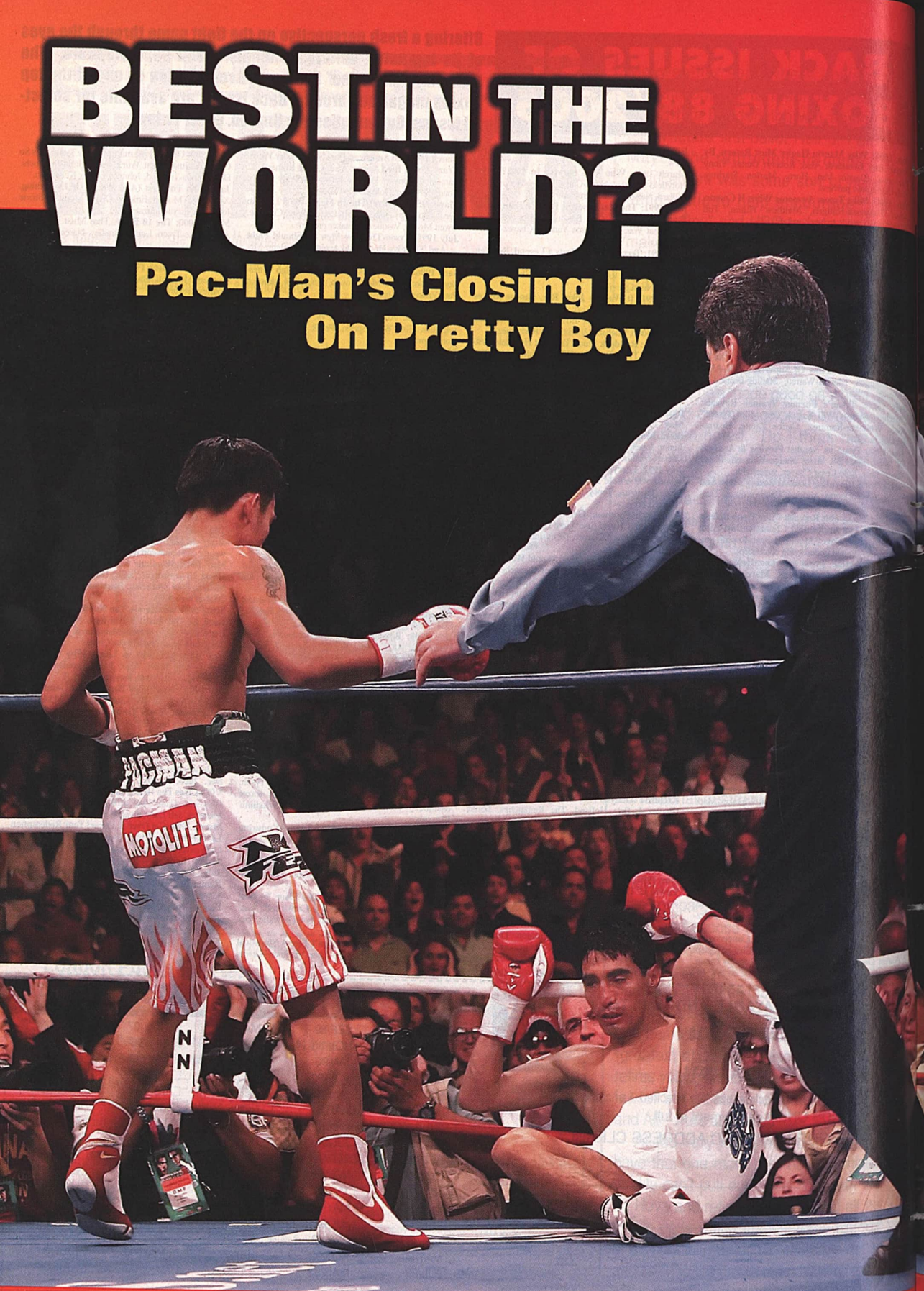
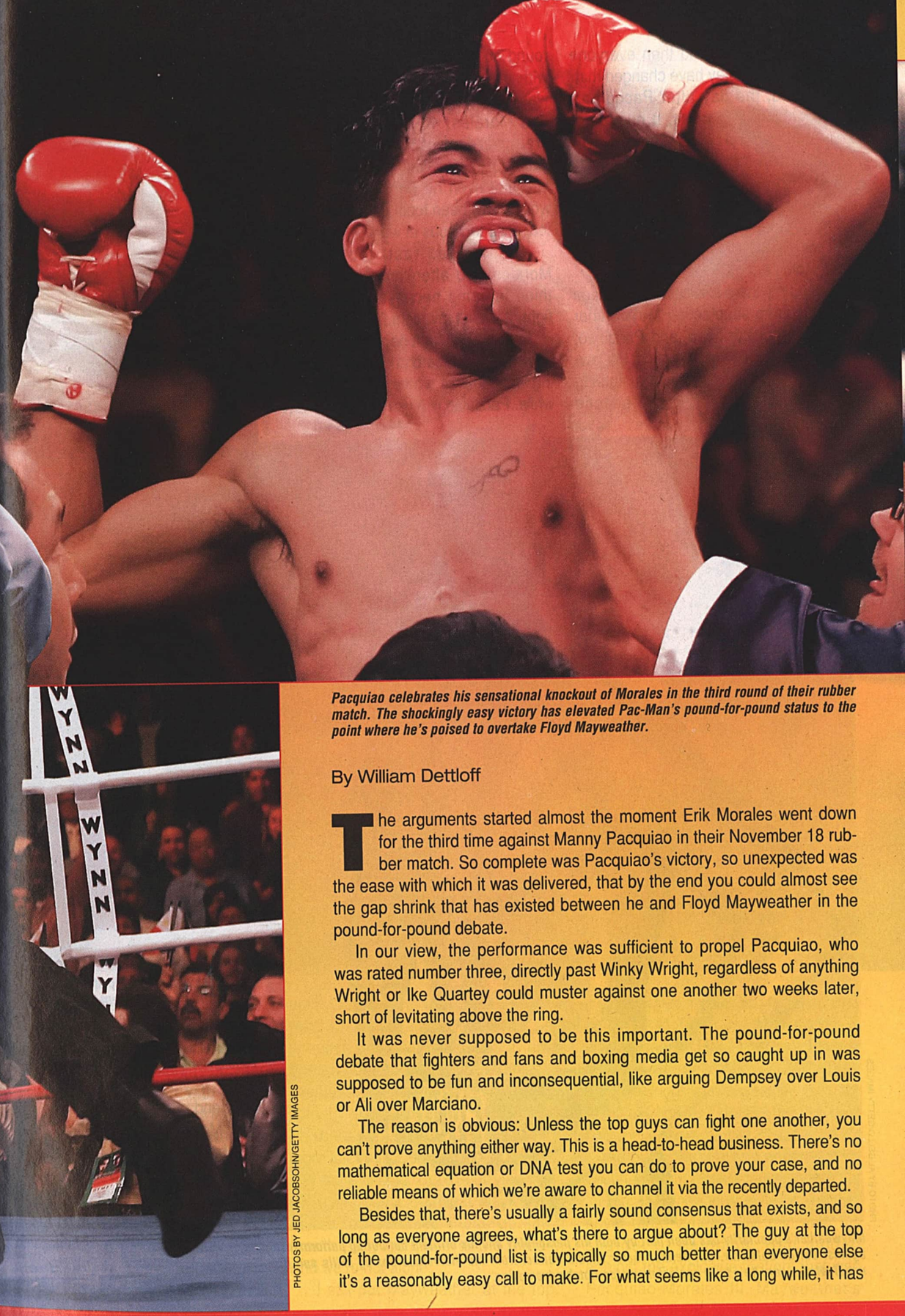
BEST IN THE WORLD?

Pac-Man's Closing In On Pretty Boy





Pacquiao celebrates his sensational knockout of Morales in the third round of their rubber match. The shockingly easy victory has elevated Pac-Man's pound-for-pound status to the point where he's poised to overtake Floyd Mayweather.

PHOTOS BY JED JACOBSOHN/GETTY IMAGES

By William Dettloff

The arguments started almost the moment Erik Morales went down for the third time against Manny Pacquiao in their November 18 rubber match. So complete was Pacquiao's victory, so unexpected was the ease with which it was delivered, that by the end you could almost see the gap shrink that has existed between he and Floyd Mayweather in the pound-for-pound debate.

In our view, the performance was sufficient to propel Pacquiao, who was rated number three, directly past Winky Wright, regardless of anything Wright or Ike Quartey could muster against one another two weeks later, short of levitating above the ring.

It was never supposed to be this important. The pound-for-pound debate that fighters and fans and boxing media get so caught up in was supposed to be fun and inconsequential, like arguing Dempsey over Louis or Ali over Marciano.

The reason is obvious: Unless the top guys can fight one another, you can't prove anything either way. This is a head-to-head business. There's no mathematical equation or DNA test you can do to prove your case, and no reliable means of which we're aware to channel it via the recently departed.

Besides that, there's usually a fairly sound consensus that exists, and so long as everyone agrees, what's there to argue about? The guy at the top of the pound-for-pound list is typically so much better than everyone else it's a reasonably easy call to make. For what seems like a long while, it has

been Mayweather and then everyone else. Pacquiao may have changed that.

Indeed, the day after Pacquiao's bludgeoning of Morales, a number of established boxing websites proclaimed him the new pound-for-pound king. "Pound-For-Pound Pacquiao," went the headline of a piece by Steve Kim at maxboxing.com. "Manny Pacquiao: The Best Fighter Alive!" raved Cliff Rold at ringtalk.com.

Certainly there is a case to be made for Pacquiao supplanting Mayweather at the top of the heap, and Pacquiao, 43-3-2 (33), made it. He was at his jaw-dropping best against Morales, flooring him with a short left in the second round and then twice more in the third with picturesque combinations. Such was Pacquiao's power and precision that Morales, 48-5 (34), one of the great warriors of his era, chose the safety of the canvas over further warfare that even he was able to discern would have been foolhardy at best, profoundly dangerous at worst.

"He was too fast, too strong," Morales said afterward. "I did everything in camp necessary to win this fight. It wasn't my night."

It wasn't his night because he was in there with as superb and vicious a fighting machine as we've seen in a long while. Pacquiao is a wonderful and terrible blend of power, speed, and abandon. Morales, being the fighter he is, was brave and willing and hurled himself right at Pacquiao—chin up in the air and winging punches—even after he'd been floored and hurt. It was like tossing a tomato into a wood chipper.

"I was faster than him, I was quicker than him, and I was stronger than him," said Pacquiao. He left out better. That he was so much better is the shock; so much better than the man who outpointed him in March 2005 and then lasted into the 10th with him in their second fight. He was at least as superior to Morales as Mayweather had been, two weeks before, to Carlos Baldomir.

That those two fights occurred so closely to one another highlighted the differences that exist between Pacquiao and Mayweather in terms of their fighting styles, their personalities, their ability to draw, and the level of their recent competition. From a fan's perspective, Mayweather loses in each one of those comparisons and maybe, eventually, will lose the war too. He's not very far ahead.

There's no denying it: Pacquiao is more fun, more popular, more powerful, and more likable. But in our view, he's not quite ready to unseat Mayweather at the top because those qualities aren't really germane to the debate. And we're not alone.

"I still put Mayweather at the top," longtime matchmaker and historian Don Elbaum told THE RING. "Mayweather is number one, and Manny is two. The first fighter I ever saw live was Willie Pep, and now I look at Mayweather. Is he as great as Pep was? No. But he's the best fighter of at least the last 20 years."

Some of those who concede Mayweather's remarkable talent loathe his increasingly cautious style of fighting, never more vehemently than after his shutout of Baldomir. And judged against the explosive firefight that was Pacquiao-Morales III, Mayweather's

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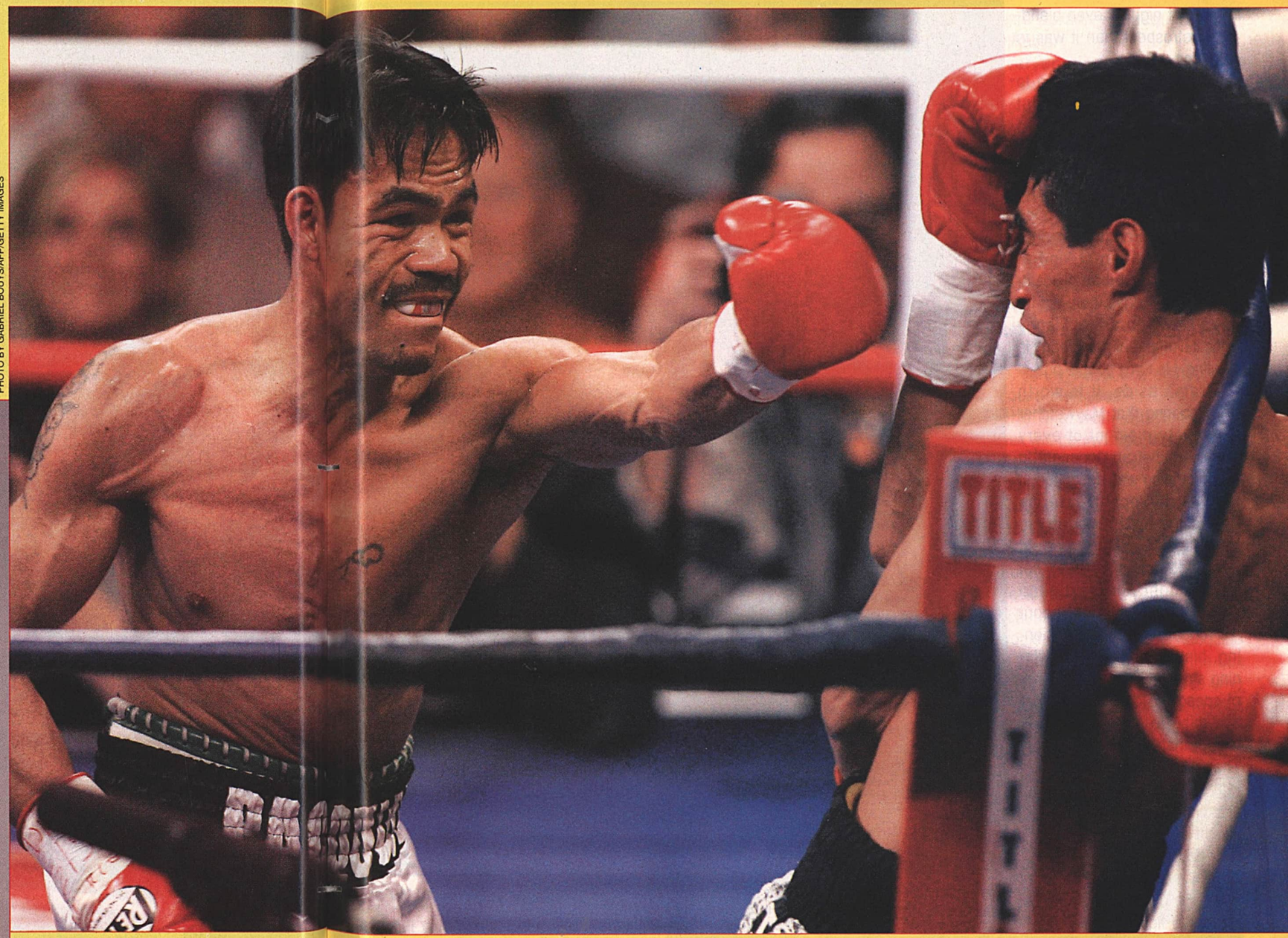

Pac attack: Pacquiao ripped into Morales with unrelenting ferocity from the opening bell. The Filipino whirlwind is a rarity, a fighter who goes for the knockout virtually every second of every round. That style has been a huge factor in his skyrocketing popularity.

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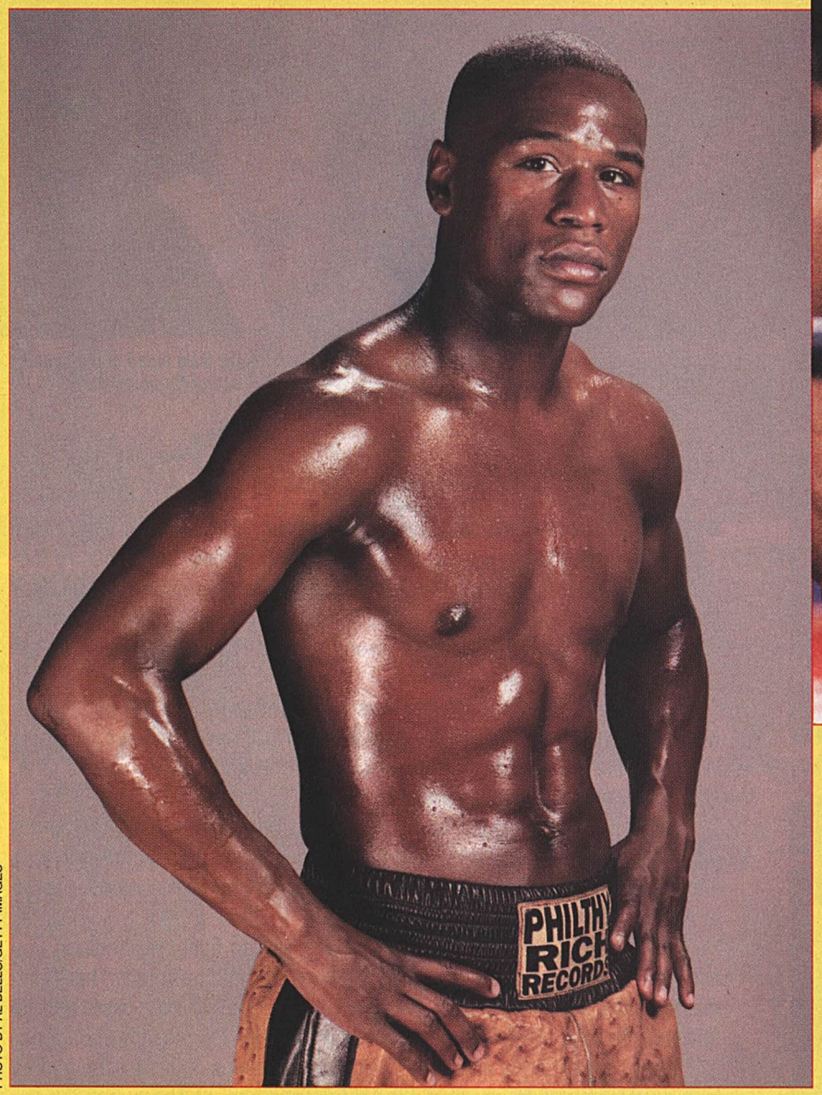

Mayweather's popularity has been hurt by both his personality and his brilliant but boring performance against Carlos Baldomir. But neither factor should detract from his marvelous boxing skills and the undefeated record he's built against many top-notch adversaries.

clinic that night is even blander in retrospect than it was in real time.

That Mayweather chose to out-maneuver and outpoint Baldomir—whom everyone described going into it as a "big" welterweight—rather than try to knock him out isn't proof that Mayweather isn't as good a fighter as Pacquiao, rather that he's a different kind of fighter. Or, as Elbaum put it, "Mayweather does it all, but he does it like an artist. Manny does it like an animal. Manny is exciting. He turns people on."

Drama aside, it is worth remembering that Mayweather won every moment of every round against an opponent in Baldomir who was described in universally positive terms before the fight. Even if you believed Mayweather would win (and who didn't?), we'll bet you thought and said good things about Baldomir: about his ruggedness, his conditioning, his consistency, his winning streak. Outside of his lack of speed, no one had a negative thing to say about him—except that he had no chance. They were proven right when Mayweather dominated him and claimed the world welterweight title.

In this comparison it helps Pacquiao too that Morales has been one of the best and most respected fighters in the game for nearly a decade. While Baldomir was hustling feather dusters on the streets of Santa Fe, Argentina, Morales was waging war with Marco Antonio Barrera, Junior Jones, Daniel Zaragoza, Wayne McCullough, Paulie Ayala, and about every other good fighter at or around his weight.

Morales is a lock for the Hall of Fame and a beloved figure in this sport. But let's be frank: He wasn't expected to win, was believed universally to be shot, or close to it, and more than one prominent observer worried publicly about his safety when the rubber match with Pacquiao was signed. Pacquiao's demonstration was undeniably awe-inspiring. But maybe we should have expected it to be.

"Morales is a little gun-shy," said veteran trainer Al Certo, who is best known for having taken Buddy McGirt to junior welter and welterweight titles in the late-'80s and early-'90s. "As you get older in this business, the older you get the more gun-shy you get, you think, 'What the f___ am I doing this for?'"

While most of us who saw Morales tear into Pacquiao even after he was floored would have difficulty reconciling that description of him, it is equally difficult envisioning the Morales of, say, even two years ago submitting the way he did against Pacquiao in November. Hell, he took far more punishment in the second fight. Indeed, it is rare that a top fighter at or near the peak of his powers will submit the way Morales did, sitting on the canvas and shaking his head as referee Vic Drakulich tolled the count at 2:57 of the third round.

Older fighters who are ready to get out of the business do that, as Certo said. And you can't have it both ways. Either Pacquiao beat a great fighter and gets maximum credit or he beat a fighter who used to be great and isn't anymore. For that he gets partial credit.

Mayweather's boorish tendencies hurt him too, especially compared to Pacquiao, who seems to most of us a humble, down-to-earth kid not terribly far removed from the poverty of his childhood. He's a fighter. Mayweather frequently comes off as a spoiled millionaire athlete. His tirade against HBO's Larry Merchant after the Baldomir fight, which was followed by a rather bizarre meltdown at the post-fight press conference only served to reinforce the consensus that he is difficult and abrasive. Pacquiao is far more likable.

"Everyone is more likable than Floyd," said Elbaum. "It's ridiculous the way he acts. He's just not a classy guy. I've never heard anyone say a single nice thing about him. As great as he is in the ring, he actually disrespects the sport with the way he acts. But it doesn't take away from his talent."

Apparently, though, it hurts him at the box office. Mayweather's challenge of Baldomir garnered approximately 325,000 pay-per-view buys and a reported 9,427 fans showed up at the Mandalay Bay. Some of those in attendance, surely those who started booing around the seventh round, left before the final bell. Although Mayweather will be involved in one of the richest fights ever in May, we know who the draw is in that one.

Pacquiao-Morales, meanwhile, sold out The Thomas & Mack Center to the tune of 18,276. (Pay-per-view figures were unavailable at press time.) Of course Morales fans represented a large chunk of that total. But the Filipinos would come out to see Pacquiao spar a kangaroo. His power at the box office is undeniable. And those who watched Pacquiao-Morales III had barely the chance to breathe, never mind to boo.

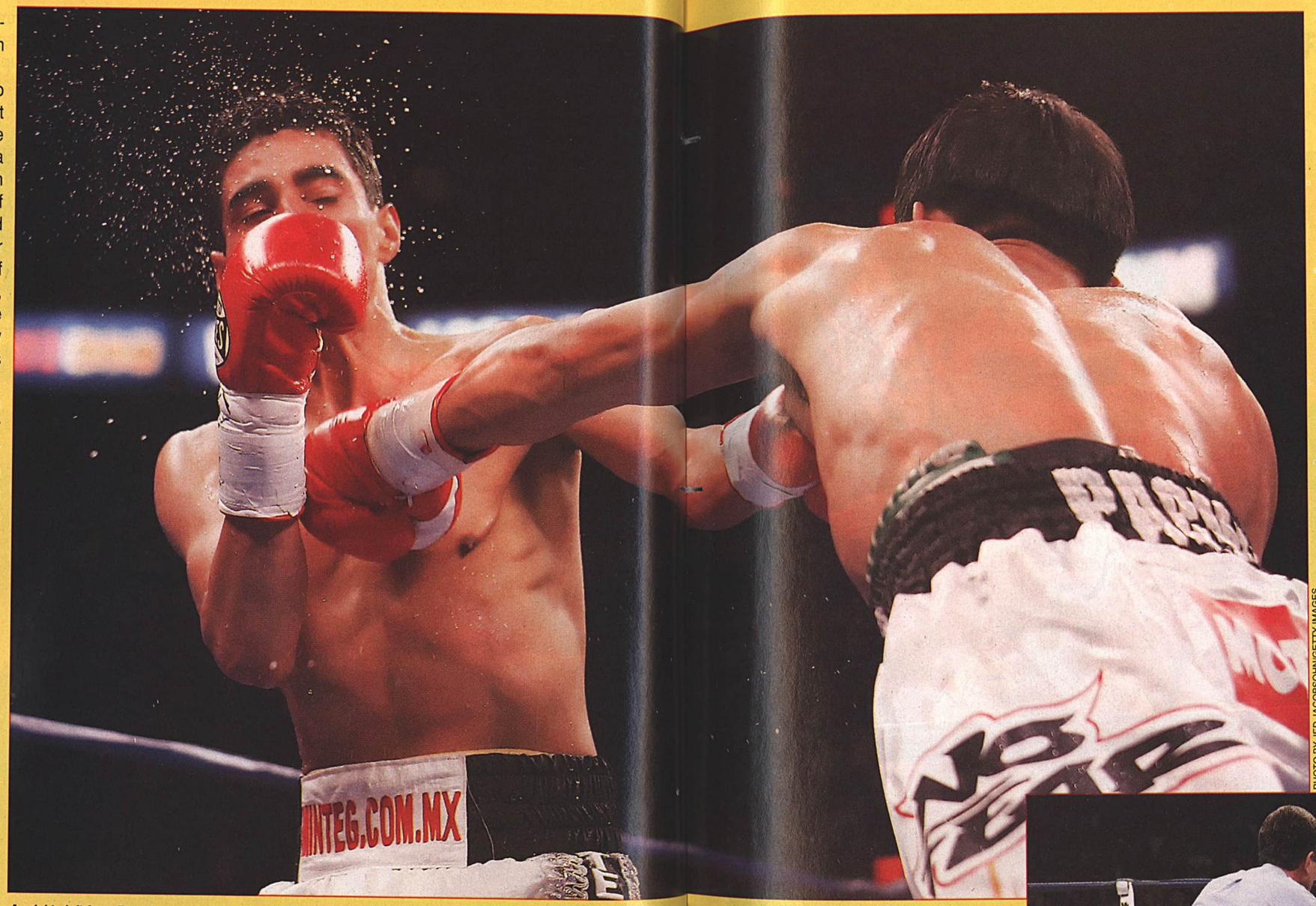

PHOTO BY JED JACOBSOHN/GETTY IMAGES

A mighty left from Pacquiao sends Morales reeling. After the fight, the defeated Mexican told the media, "For the first time in my career, I actually felt the power of my opponent. I was hurt by his punches."

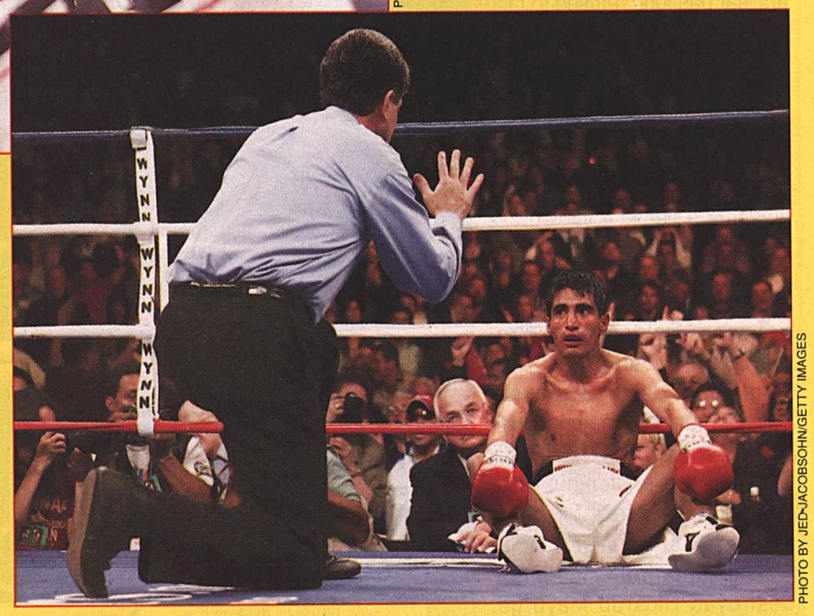

PHOTO BY JED JACOBSOHN/GETTY IMAGES

After being knocked down three times, Morales just sat on the canvas and watched referee Drakulich count him out. To some veteran observers, this is a sign that the Mexican icon is ready for retirement.

Back in the late-'80s and early-'90s, you thought either Julio Cesar Chavez or Pernell Whitaker was the best in the world, pound-for-pound. You liked Chavez' hooks to the body or Whitaker's defensive genius. Opinion was split, and in some circles stayed that way even after Chavez got the gift of a lifetime when the judges gave him a draw against "Sweet Pea" in their 1993 match. There are similarities here. Their styles are so well-defined you're pulled in the direction of the one you prefer.

Certo, for example, would seem to favor punchers and likes Pacquiao. "Mayweather is full of s___," he said. "He's like Whitaker, who would shake his ass and win a decision and everybody called him 'pound-for-pound.' Really, he's a decent fighter, but it's all speed. He's never learned how to trade. He just throws flashy punches. But Pacquiao is a tough bastard. He can fight."

There's no denying that about Pacquiao. He is the most dynamic prizefighter in the business right now and also one of the most exciting. Unlike Mayweather, who for reasons still unclear has long refused to face Antonio Margarito, Pacquiao consistently faces top-tier fighters. Anyone who over the last three years has met Marco Antonio Barrera, Juan Manuel Marquez, and Morales (three times) is a fighter's fighter. We can only hope that the contractual issues that erupted shortly before the Morales fight between Golden Boy Promotions and Bob Arum's Top Rank don't delay or prevent possible future rematches with Barrera or Marquez.

Mayweather, for his part, must be given credit for facing De La Hoya, a junior middleweight, who, in his last fight, destroyed Ricardo Mayorga. Mayweather is outsized by welterweights and he's taking on a very good and skilled 154-pounder. That's got to count for something. But his hold on the pound-for-pound title is tenuous. Pacquiao's not there yet, but he's close. He's not exactly sneaking up on Mayweather; he's too good to sneak up on anyone. But you don't have to surprise someone to overtake them. You just have to be better. Pacquiao is almost there. ■

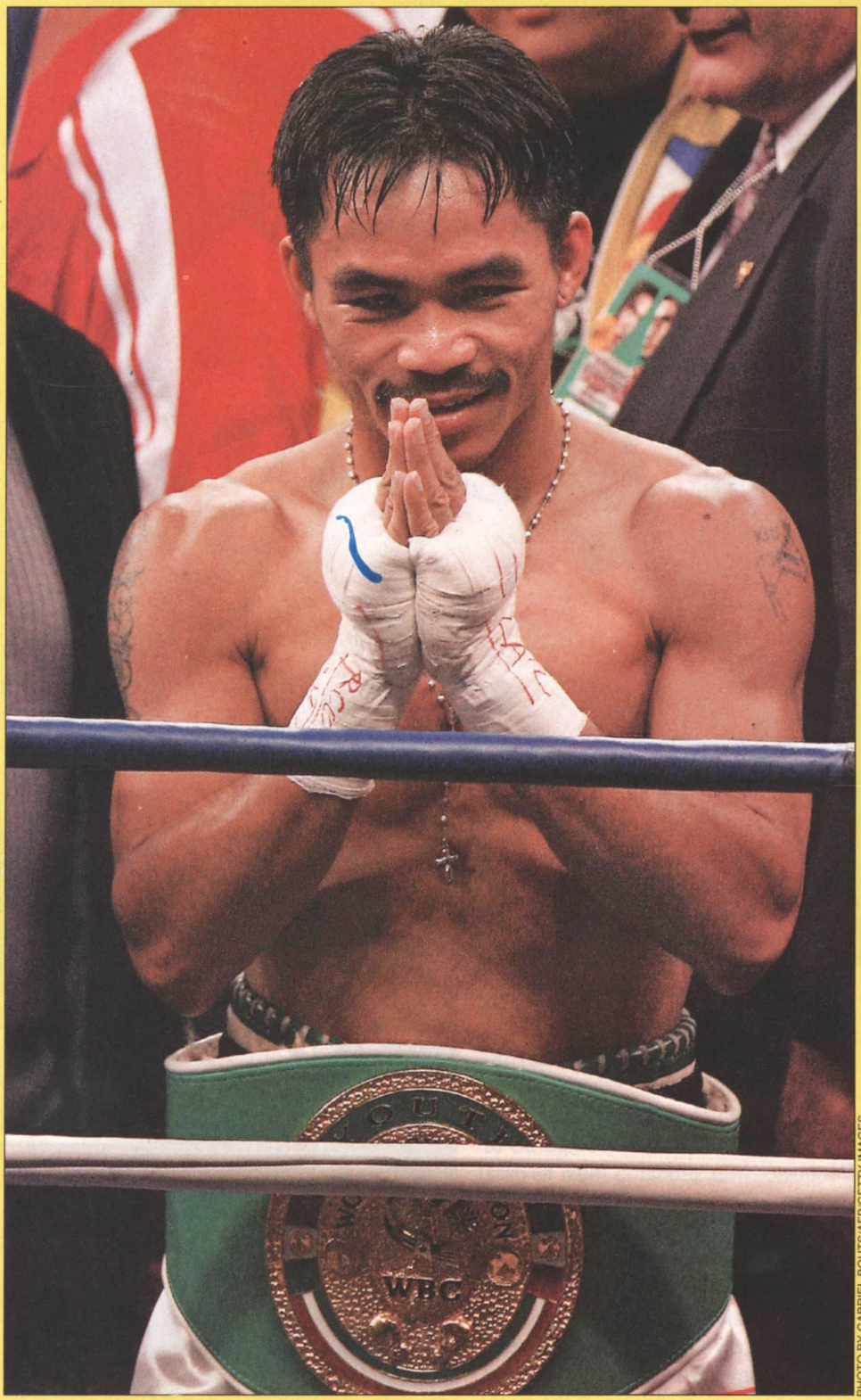

PHOTO BY GABRIEL BOUTS/AFP/GETTY IMAGES

Pacquiao salutes his many fans among the crowd of more than 18,000 that packed the Thomas & Mack Center. Fans hope that the expected court battle between Top Rank and Golden Boy for Pac-Man's services doesn't impede his flourishing career.

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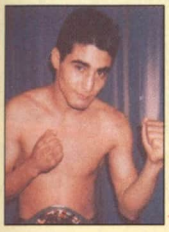

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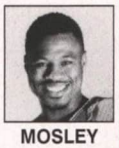

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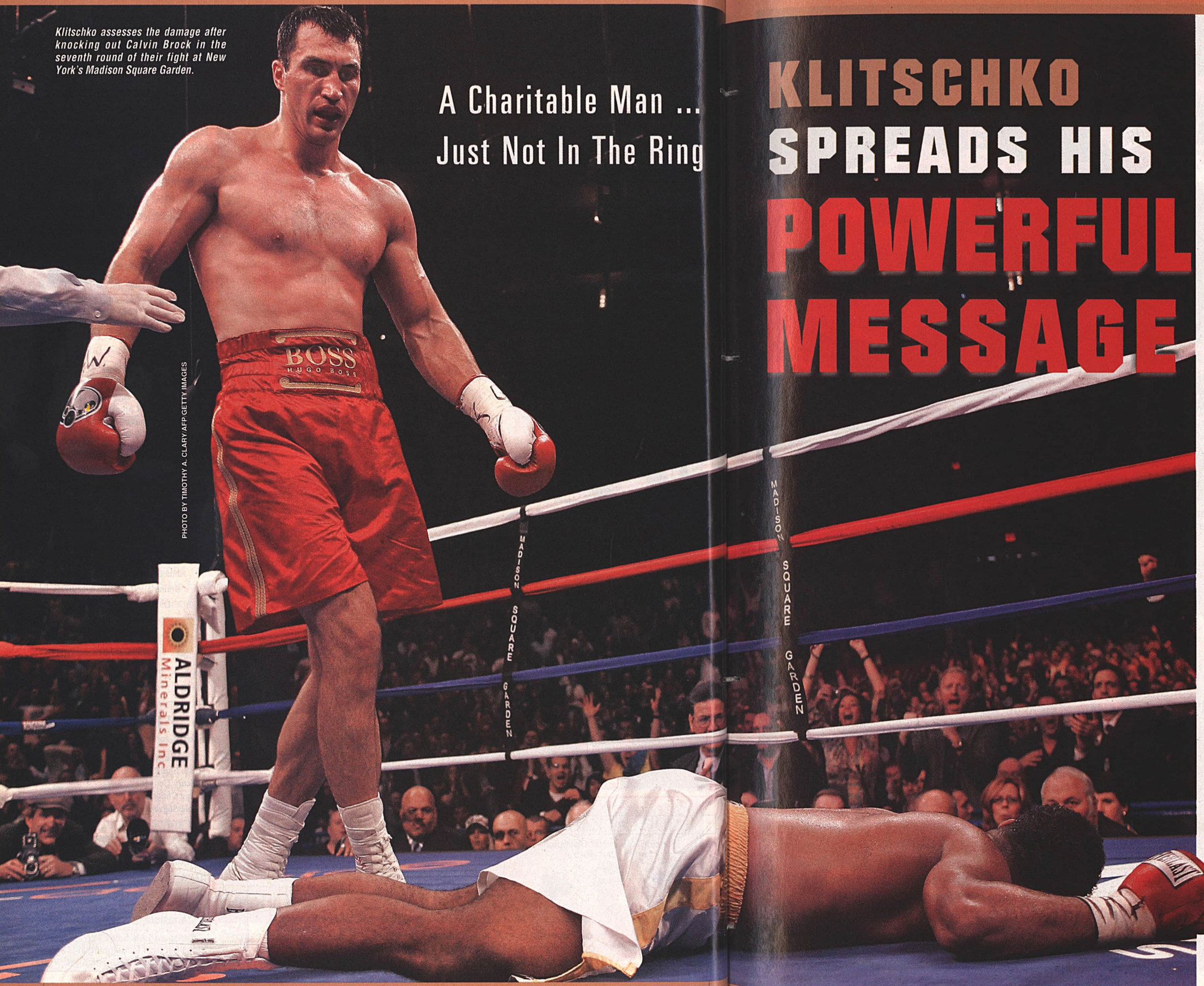

Klitschko assesses the damage after knocking out Calvin Brock in the seventh round of their fight at New York's Madison Square Garden.

PHOTO BY TIMOTHY A. CLARY/AFP/GETTY IMAGES

A Charitable Man ...
Just Not In The Ring

KLITSCHKO SPREADS HIS POWERFUL MESSAGE

By Don Stradley

Wladimir Klitschko walked to the podium and settled his towering frame into his seat. The press, made up of 40 or 50 reporters, many of whom came to New York from Russia to see him, looked like gnomes staring up at him.

He'd just kayoed Calvin Brock. It was the sort of decisive knockout that is supposed to make believers of us.

"This fight was for the children," Klitschko said in his vastly improved English. He was referring

PHOTO BY TIMOTHY A. CLARY/AFP/GETTY IMAGES

Both men were tentative at first, but things began to change when Klitschko started to spear Brock with powerful left jabs. And when "Dr. Steel Hammer" gets his long left going, it's very difficult for an opponent to get inside and do damage.

to the $250,000 of his purse that he was donating to UNESCO (United Nations Educational, Scientific, and Cultural Organization) to help educate third world children. "Children are important not just in America and Europe, but Africa and everywhere. We all have to get together on this to help their future."

Regardless of what one thinks of Klitschko as a fighter, there's an aura about him that shines through. It's not just his Ph.D. or his imposing stature, or the fact that he speaks many languages. He's possessed of such a basic kindness that it's almost humbling to be in his presence.

Along with older brother and former RING champ Vitali, Wladimir Klitschko has been a UNESCO ambassador since 2002. "It is a long-term relationship and we look forward to helping children in need in developing countries," Klitschko said. The brothers have since visited Brazil, and participated in charity golf tournaments to raise funds, but it wasn't until a recent visit to Namibia that their mission became clear. "We went to Namibia and saw how terrible the conditions are," Klitschko told SI.com. "We saw how little some people have and were moved greatly." On the official UNESCO website, Klitschko was quoted as saying, "This time we assessed what is needed on the education sector. We will hopefully be back in a year's time to see the progress made on projects designed resulting from our trip."

The UNESCO Director General named the Klitschko brothers as the UNESCO Champions for Sports and Ambassadors for Education for Children in Need, which supports more than 180 projects in 87 countries. Other sports celebs working for UNESCO include soccer legend Pele and Formula One racer Michael Schumacher. Calvin Brock probably wishes Klitschko would spend even more time helping the world's children, and less time hitting people. The steelhammer right that dashed Brock's title hopes was one of the best punches we've seen this year.

Despite the finality of the knockout, however, some in press row still think of Klitschko as a shivering junkyard of old boxing parts. They cackled when Klitschko visibly gulped air during the third round, as if they expected him to keel over from exhaustion. Perhaps it's because Klitschko looks like Superman; when you're so perfectly designed, anything less than a perfect performance draws immediate and long lasting scorn. The dramatic ring failures of his past may haunt him still. This is unfortunate because Klitschko, while flawed, is a pretty good heavyweight. He knocks men out, which is supposed to be the highest currency in boxing. He's also one of the rare ath-

letes who cares about people, and actually walks the walk when it comes to humanistic causes.

Klitschko spoke eloquently about his desire to fight around the globe, using his success to help people. He said that regardless of the alphabet belts he carried in and out of the ring, he doesn't consider himself the real heavyweight champ. His humility was refreshing, as was the way he politely handled some mundane questions (three separate Internet reporters asked him who he planned to fight next, giving credence to those who say boxing journalism is dead). He even showed remarkable poise when Shannon Briggs intruded on the press conference to lay down a challenge. Training these days on cheesecake and God knows what else, Briggs looked as big as a Brink's truck. But Klitschko didn't sweat him. "Shannon," he said with a smirk, "this is a Klitschko party right now."

Briggs may have to wait for Klitschko. During the conference, Klitschko said he wanted to fight all of the beltholders, but also added that unification bouts are meaningless. "The people decide who the real champion is," he said. This could be Klitschko's way of saying Briggs' WBO bauble means little to him. Besides, there's already some loose talk that Klitschko could meet Nicolay Valuev sometime next year in what would be a blockbuster European promotion. American fans often forget that boxing exists in other parts of the world, but both Klitschko and Valuev are superstars overseas. Klitschko isn't in a hurry to sign on with Valuev's co-promoter, Don King, but fighting Valuev would be more lucrative than a match with crusty old Briggs or journeyman-turned-alphabet-titlist Oleg Maskaev, although beating Maskaev would earn Klitschko THE RING's heavyweight title.

A Valuev-Klitschko fight would also be hot among Russian fight fans because, much like Mexican fans were torn between old school Julio Cesar Chavez and the flashier Oscar De La Hoya, Russians are split between the intellectual Klitschko and the working-class Valuev.

"Nico has actually become more popular than Klitschko among Russians," said Alexander Beleukliy of Moscow's daily *Sport Express*. "Klitschko is well-known for his intelli-

Once Klitschko began to zero in with his right hand, Brock's cause was lost. But notice how low Klitschko is carrying his left. Who knows what would have happened if Brock had beat him to the punch.

PHOTO BY NICK LAHAM/BONGARTS/GETTY IMAGES

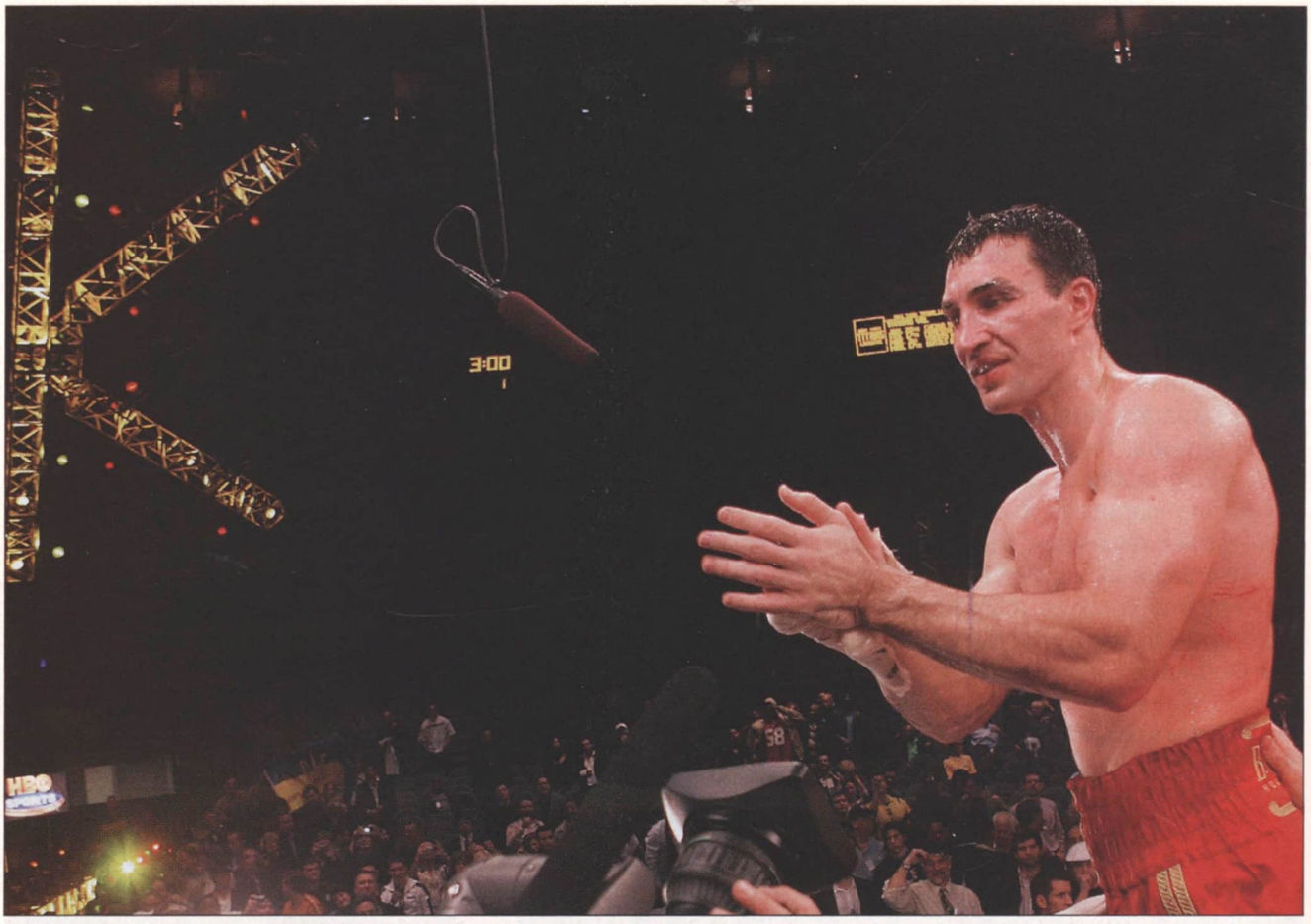

PHOTO BY NICK LAHAM/BONGARTS/GETTY IMAGES

Klitschko greets his growing number of U.S. fans after disposing of Brock in fine fashion. There were more than 14,000 paying customers at Madison Square Garden, which bodes well for future U.S. appearances by the Ukrainian powerpuncher.

gence, but Nico Valuev is a very bright man. He is perhaps as bright as Klitschko, but he doesn't present himself that way. He's humble about it, and Russian fans like that. Klitschko has also angered some Russians who don't agree with his politics. He lives in America now, and speaks English, while Nico stays in Russia and is not likely to master any other languages. Klitschko is everybody's Russian; Nico Valuev is Russia's Russian."

Klitschko's political views may have alienated a portion of the Russian audience, but Madison Square Garden was fairly loaded with Ukrainian fans waving blue and yellow flags. And if some American fans aren't quite rabid about him, there were some who high-fived each other when Brock was spiked face-first into the canvas. For some, Klitschko has the same quality that made Lennox Lewis and Tommy Hearns interesting: great skill and power combined with a fragility that made every fight a drama. The fact that he is vocal about facing the other titlists is especially gutsy because those men are all rugged and risky opponents. He could easily fight a string of softies in Europe, but he wants the greater challenge.

It's also fascinating to watch Klitschko fight since his brother's retirement. When Vitali was champion, Wladimir experienced a meltdown. Earlier in their careers, it was Wlad who soared while Vitali got bad press for quitting in his corner during a fight. It was as if they couldn't enjoy success at the same time. But now that Vitali has left the sport, Wladimir seems looser and unencumbered. If there was pressure to keep up with Vitali, it seems to be gone. Now he's on a winning streak.

Brock, 29-1 (22), seemed unsure of himself during the first round, tottering across the canvas as Klitschko stiff-armed him away. During the second and third, however, Brock started smashing right hooks to Klitschko's body. The blows sounded like someone chopping into a telephone pole with a shovel. The result was that Klitschko's torso turned bright red and welts rose on his back from the constant battering. In return, Klitschko used his jab and landed the occasional cheap shot (yes, the ambassador for UNESCO can rabbit punch like Chuck Wepner). Klitschko seemed tentative, however, as if he were still haunted by his lack of gas during the Lamon Brewster fight. He also kept his right hand cocked, but never fired. Later he said that Brock's lunging movements made him wary of throwing it. It wasn't until late in the fifth that he landed one that made Brock shudder.

Brock was still game in the sixth when a gash appeared on Klitschko's left eyebrow. "The cut made me mad," Klitschko later said. Klitschko spent the rest of the round winging

right hands and clinching to nullify Brock's bull rushing technique. At one point, with a "U.S.A." chant building in the crowd, both fighters went down in a tangle of legs. Klitschko rose slowly, looking determined. The fight had turned into an unexpected scuffle.

Klitschko, 47-3 (42), came out fresh for the seventh and blasted Brock with a series of rights. The finish came when Klitschko timed a perfect left-right combo that dropped Brock on his face. Referee Wayne Kelley waved the fight over at 2:10 of the round. "Wladimir was better than I thought he was," said Brock.

The 14,262 in attendance seemed satisfied, roaring as Klitschko stood on the ropes and waved to his supporters. As the knockout was replayed on the TV screen above the ring, the Ukrainian crowd erupted again. Slinky looking Russian babes wearing thigh high boots raced to the exit ramp to take pictures. One heavyset fellow with mutton chop sideburns hopped up and down bellowing "Ve are de best!" Valuev may be the favorite in Russia, but there was a rapturous noise going on in Klitschko's newly adopted home of New York. It wasn't quite the howl that accompanies Ricky Hatton in Manchester, but the sound was hardy and warm. There was even some dancing in the aisles.

Klitschko's trainer, Emanuel Steward, however, looked exasperated during the postfight press conference. When someone asked why Klitschko took so long to throw his right, Steward shrugged and said, "Ask him." He acknowledged that it wasn't Klitschko's best night, but praised him for taking on young, undefeated fighters like Brock and Sam Peter. Steward promised we'd see better things in the future. We don't doubt it. Klitschko is never dull.

Still, the loudest cheers of the night were not for Klitschko. The biggest noise was for Muhammad Ali, who was ringside to watch his daughter Laila fight on the undercard. Klitschko may not be able to turn the boxing ring into a political stage the way Ali did—the times and circumstances are different—but Klitschko shares with Ali a sense that fame can be used to send a positive message. Ali was the last heavyweight champ to speak out about things that concerned him. He was the last to ask questions and make people think. Boxing fans should be proud of Klitschko for being not only an ambassador for UNESCO, but also an ambassador for the sport.

As for Ali, the cheers came when Michael Buffer introduced him, along with other celebs, at ringside. There were several Hollywood types and former champs in the arena, but Buffer saved Ali for last. Ironically, Laila's fight was long over and The Greatest had already left the building. The crowd was cheering an empty seat. Perhaps Klitschko was fighting for the right to fill that vacant seat, if not as an all-time great, at least as a champion who tried to make the world a better place. ■

PHOTO BY NICK LAHAM/BONGARTS/GETTY IMAGES

Muhammad Ali and his wife, Lonnie, were at the Garden to see his daughter Laila fight on the undercard, but The Greatest left before the main event. Like Ali, Klitschko is a socially conscious boxer who wants to help make the world a better place.

Don Stradley is a freelance writer from Massachusetts and a regular contributor to this magazine.

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PETER MANFREDO JR.

IS IT PROVIDENCE THAT HE'S THE NEW VINNY PAZ?

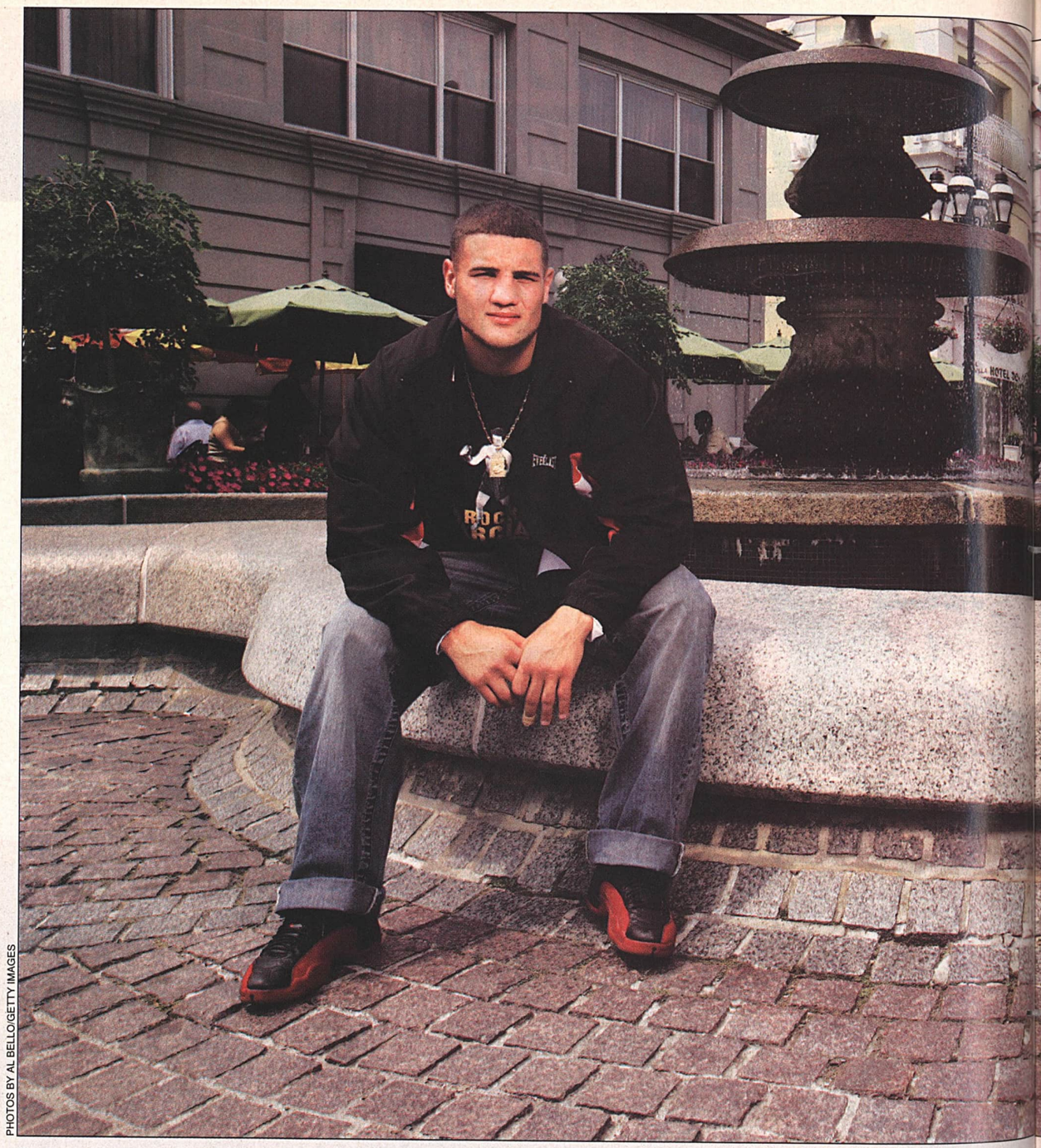
"The Pride Of Providence" poses in front of the Rhode Island Capitol Building. Hometown hero Manfredo has seen his popularity soar due in large part to his participation in the first season of *The Contender*.

PHOTO BY AL BELLO/GETTY IMAGES

By Don Stradley

Providence, Rhode Island, once had a reputation riddled with third-rate Italian criminals, adult entertainment venues, drugs, and crooked politicians. In more recent times, the city center has been cleaned up, giving Providence the feel of a polished New England university town. The only traces of dirty old Providence are in the occasional "gentleman's clubs" still operating a few blocks from the unfortunately titled Dunkin' Donuts Center.

The city even has a new boxing hero to go along with its new look: Peter Manfredo Jr. While Vinny



PHOTOS BY AL BELLO/GETTY IMAGES

Pazienza was a perfect fit for the seedy Providence of the 1980s, the city's new, spruced up atmosphere is better suited to Manfredo. He's watched his Federal Hill neighborhood go from being a drug dealer's hangout to a popular tourist site. It's now known as the Little Italy of Rhode Island, and his mother, Lori, works at one of the area's restaurants.

In private, Manfredo is every bit the wise-ass Pazienza was, but in public, he's soft-spoken, resembling the no-frills family man persona he showed on *The Contender*. It's this latter image that has turned him into a local hero.

Manfredo's recent bout with another Providence fighter, Joey Spina, had plenty of local build-up, with both young men running their mouths about who was the city's top pug. Manfredo's father even displayed some meathead behavior when he and Spina's trainer, Eddie Mustafa Muhammad, traded threats. Still, the city streets were calm on fight night. You wouldn't have known a local feud was about to reach a violent climax.

Gradually, however, the Manfredo faithful appeared. The crowd for *The Contender* special "Put Up Or Shut Up" seemed to be made up of families, moms, dads, sons and daughters, hyper teenagers, and grandmothers.

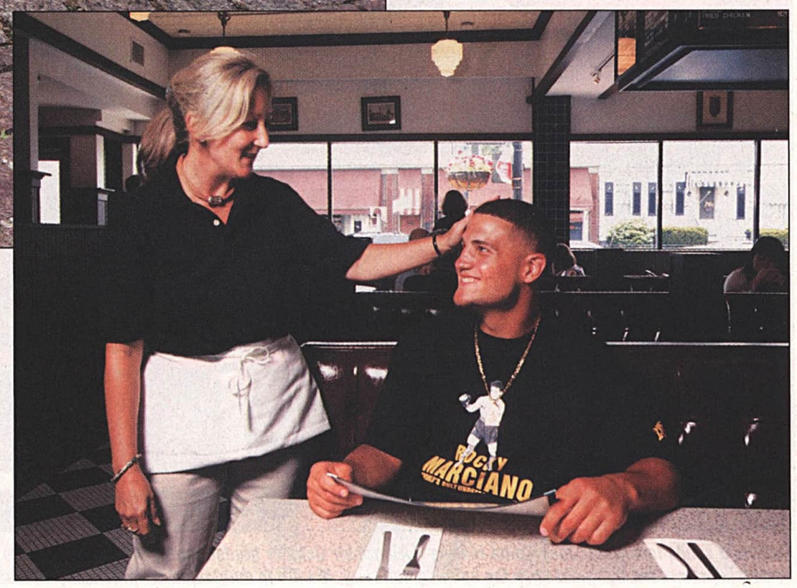
The mustache and mullet is still popular among Providence males, but there were plenty in the crowd sporting the chinstrap beard favored by Manfredo. Sure, there were a few dozen *Soprano* wannabes in leather overcoats with dishwater-blonde girlfriends, and there were a few chubby guys sparring playfully in the lobby, but it didn't feel like a hardcore boxing crowd. These folks could have been cuing up to see an ice show, or the Dunkin' Donuts Center's next attraction, The Cheetah Girls.

"No one gave a crap about Manfredo before he was on *The Contender*," said Bill Reynolds, sports columnist for *The Providence Journal*. "He used to be lucky to draw 1,000 people. But television has a lot of influence."

Like the unknown singers from *American Idol* who have gone on to sell millions of CDs, Manfredo has been launched by *The Contender* into a strange type of stardom. Many boxing fans regard him with cynicism; women stop him on the streets to tell him they love him. While Manfredo is probably better at boxing then the *Idols* are at singing, he does have something in common with Kelly Clarkson and Taylor Hicks—for better or worse, he's branded for life by a TV show. When he entered the ring to face Spina, *The Contender*'s ponderous theme song wailed from the arena's sound system. More than a year has passed since he lost to Sergio Mora in *The Contender* Season One finale, but the show's unwieldy music follows him everywhere.

"I asked them if I could use my own music, but they said no, I have to use *The Contender* theme," said Manfredo. "But I don't really care, man. I'm just

The once-seedy Federal Hill neighborhood in Providence has been spruced up (left) and is now a popular tourist site, which includes many restaurants. In fact, Manfredo's mother, Lori, works as a waitress in one of the local eateries (below).



there to fight, collect a paycheck, and feed my family."

After beating Scott Pemberton last February, Manfredo told THE RING's sister publication, *Boxing 2006*, that he wanted to break away from *The Contender*. He's obviously changed his mind since then.

"I just wanted to fight more often," Manfredo said. "That's why I felt that way. *The Contender* is one of the things that helped shape me along the way, along with my father, and Freddie [Roach], and Vinny Pazienza. I have great respect for everyone involved with *The Contender*. I'm even cool with Sergio now. He's at 160, and we're doing our thing at 168."

But *The Contender* stigma is tricky. HBO allegedly balked at a proposed Roy Jones-Manfredo bout because they didn't want to help promote *The Contender*. "It's not fair," Manfredo said. "The fighters shouldn't have to suffer."

The Contender's producers also blew a nice TV opportunity by not bringing Paz into the ring for a prefight introduction in Providence. State officials, however, concerned about the prefight antagonism between Spina and Manfredo, limited the number of people allowed into the ring. Still, simply seeing Paz wave from his ringside seat was fun for those who witnessed his heyday.

"Some people around here still think Vinny was the greatest fighter ever," said George Kimball, who covered boxing for the *Boston Herald* during "The Pazmanian Devil's" prime. Kimball joked that Providence fans still think Paz was robbed against Roy Jones, and Jones did everything but decapitate him. "The crowds were always 100 percent for Vinny, and zero for the other guy. Spina has about a quarter of the crowd. If he were fighting Vinny, he'd have zero."

"Vinny knew how to be a star," said Reynolds. "I'm not sure if Peter knows how. Vinny had the style, the clothes, the personality. He was a phenomenon. Vinny sold this place out all the time. Peter is at the height of his fame right now, and the place is only half full." Reynolds cited a poor undercard, and "stupid" $500 tickets as reasons for the slightly disappointing turnout of around 5,000. Reynolds also wondered if some of the initial *Contender* hype has faded away. Last February, the Dunkin' Donuts Center was full during a blizzard when Manfredo fought Pemberton.

"He'll have to beat a real champion, and then he might be mentioned along with Vinny," said Reynolds.

Spina, 19-1-1 (14), is far from being a real champ, but he looked much bigger than Manfredo as he forced the action in round one. He smiled demonically, and late in the round he knocked Manfredo off-balance, giving his Silver Lake fans some hope. "If he's 'The Pride Of Providence,' then I'm the 'King' of Providence," Spina had said before the fight.

PHOTO BY ED MULHOLLAND

Manfredo sends local rival Joey Spina reeling during their October grudge match held at the Dunkin' Donuts Center in Providence. There was lots of trash talk prior to the fight, but once the opening bell rang, Manfredo dominated his previously unbeaten adversary.

Finishing flurry: Manfredo clocks Spina with a right hand (above) just before sending his opponent into a sitting position on the ropes (below). The mismatch was stopped in the third round, much to the delight of the mainly pro-Manfredo crowd.

By the second round, however, Manfredo was feinting with his left and belting Spina repeatedly with right hands. At one point, he buckled Spina's legs so badly that a knockdown could have been called. By now, Manfredo's Federal Hill following was standing on their seats, screaming themselves hoarse. For a moment, the cross-town rivalry burned like a classic 1950s battle. An Irish-looking Manfredo supporter seated near the press row shouted, "He walks around at 180. When he hits you, you stay hit!" The ice follies crowd was suddenly a fight crowd.

Manfredo finished the job in the third, knocking Spina to his knees with a series of bombs-away right crosses that would have made Rocky Graziano proud. As a titanic roar filled the arena, Spina's corner signaled for the fight to be stopped. With Spina leaning on him for support, referee Charlie Dwyer called a halt at the 1:01 mark. Manfredo, propelled by anger left over from the previous week's trash talk, made one last lunge at the groggy Spina. Dwyer kept the fighters apart,

PHOTOS BY ED MULHOLLAND

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but for a second it looked like things could turn ugly. Manfredo may not match Paz and The Pazmaniacs just yet, but Manfredomania is definitely strong. The sound in the Dunkin' Donuts Center was World Series loud.

"I never wanted to hurt anybody from Rhode Island, but he kept shooting his mouth off. I guess he made his money, but I gave him the beating of his life," said Manfredo.

Regarding the hand injury that Spina allegedly suffered during the fight, Manfredo told THE RING he thought it was a fake. "He definitely didn't break his hand. He didn't hit me hard enough to break it. When Arturo Gatti breaks his hand, he makes a face. Spina never did that. He came to the postfight conference wearing a cast. How can you wear a cast when you haven't been to a hospital to get X-rays? He was just making excuses. He should just retire, truthfully. The kid doesn't take the game serious. He deserved the beating."

Manfredo, 26-3 (12), spoke to the press after the fight, sharing the dais with his father and *Contender* producer Jeff Wald. Underneath his snazzy jacket and red tie, Manfredo was wearing rumpled jeans that looked to have been plucked from the bottom of a laundry bag. That's Manfredo at this point in his career—he's polished enough for *The Contender*, but there's still some dirty old Providence in him. He seemed a bit tired, too, as if the event had jet-lagged him.

He answered questions about Spina ("He'd been lead to believe he was at my level. I showed him he wasn't. But good luck to him. It's hard to be a fighter."), his rugged training ("They were beating me with sticks."), and his loyal Italian following ("I wear the IW on my trunks because I'm an Italian warrior. At the gym they called me LaMotta because I'm willing to take two to land one."). Wald sat to his left, as cocky and smug as if he'd just kayoed Spina himself. When Manfredo was asked about his relationship with the show, Wald put his hand on the fighter's arm and said, "Peter and I got married."

There was a creepy truth to Wald's joke. Manfredo is married to *The Contender* for now. While there are probably still times he'd rather be free of their influence, he'll try to make as much cash as he can while under their banner.

"Everything is great now," Manfredo told THE RING a few days after the Spina fight. "For a while I felt they were treating Mora and Alphonso Gomez better than me. But

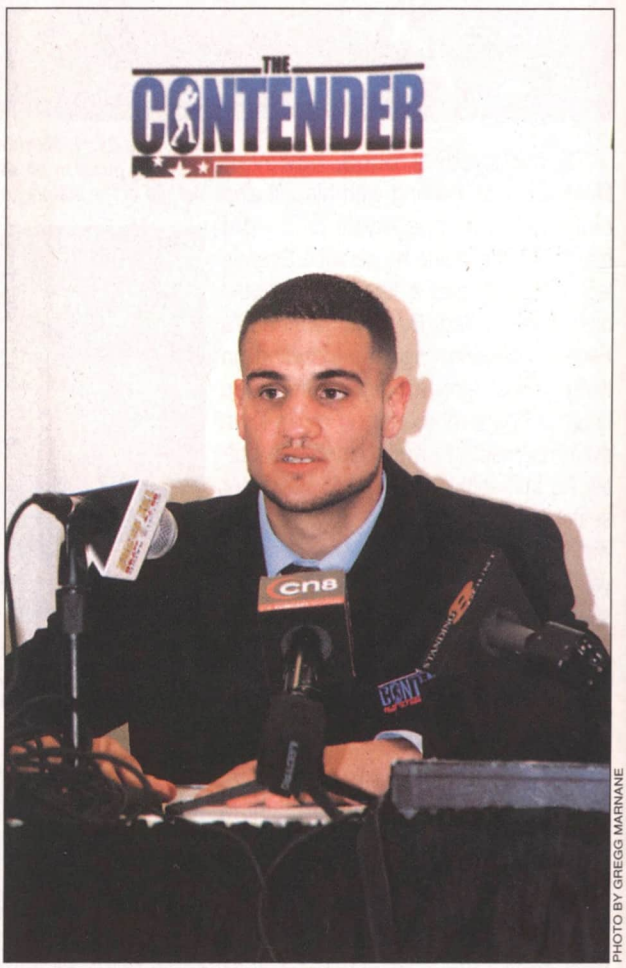
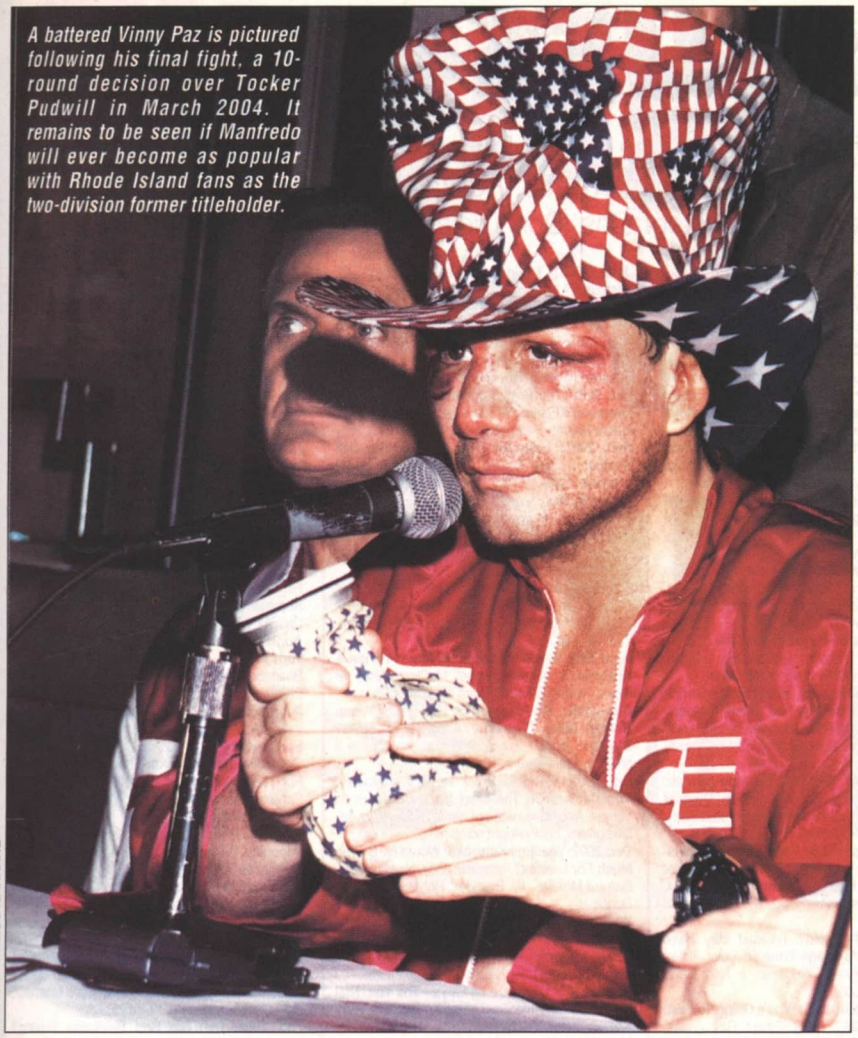


PHOTO BY GREGG MARNANE

Manfredo addresses the media after blasting out Spina. The fighter has mixed feelings about his association with* The Contender*, but for the time being at least, they seem to have worked out their differences.



A battered Vinny Paz is pictured following his final fight, a 10-round decision over Tocker Pudwill in March 2004. It remains to be seen if Manfredo will ever become as popular with Rhode Island fans as the two-division former titleholder.

PHOTO BY GREGG MARNANE

that's all clear now; they're treating me fine, if not better.

"After I beat Pemberton, I was supposed to fight Omar Sheika 90 days later at Mohegan Sun, but they wouldn't let it happen. They said they couldn't afford to pay me. That's when I flipped out and obtained some lawyers and tried to get out of *The Contender* contract. But we worked it out. Now I've put my trust in them and went back to them. We'll see what they give me now. They've promised me a big fight in January."

Manfredo is 2-0 with 2 knockouts since joining the super middleweight class. He likes his new power. He's a good boxer, too, much smarter than he's given credit for being. He may end up being *The Contender*'s lasting legacy. But he can waste no more time on the likes of Pemberton and Spina. It's time for a real opponent. He wants Jones.

"It would be redemption for Paz," said Manfredo. "I'm another Italian-American, on his way up, and Jones is on his way down. I'd avenge Paz' loss. It would be a good fight and a good ticket-seller."

Pazienza is never far from Manfredo's thoughts. After *The Contender* special, it was Paz who lingered in our thoughts too. Sitting ringside like a pawnshop Buddha, Paz smiled jauntily, even though his face looked battered and worn from a career that spanned more than 400 professional rounds. His oft-injured right paw looked less like a hand and more like a kneecap with fingers sewn on. Still, if Paz had stepped into the ring to wish Manfredo and Spina luck, he would have brought the house down. He also would have been passing the torch. Paz sacrificed a face and a hand to thrill Rhode Islanders. Now it's Manfredo'sturn. ■

Don Stradley is a freelance writer from Massachusetts and a regular contributor to this magazine.

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RING UPDATE WITH WILLIAM DETTLOFF

EVERY MONDAY ... EXCLUSIVELY ON: thering-online.com

Always insightful and often provocative, William Dettloff, *The Ring*'s senior writer, is the thinking-fans' columnist, a writer who never settles for the same old stale commentary you've already read a dozen times. For example, here's Dettloff's take on a handful of hot topics:

The dangers of boxing: "Long after you and I and everyone we know are long gone, men will still be fighting one another with their fists, and sometimes bad things will happen as a result. You may feel guilty about that fact if you wish. I will not."

Nicolay Valuev: "He's hairier than Robin Williams and facially looks an awful lot like Lurch from *The Addams Family*. In today's heavyweight division, that can get you a good long way."

The lack of a dominant heavyweight: "When a heavyweight champ is dominant, the only fun comes in wondering when someone will cut him down to size and how. We rush a guy to the top of the mountain just for the pleasure of watching him get knocked off."

Dettloff on thering-online.com ... The perfect way to answer the week's opening bell!

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The Ring's Fights of the Year: 1945-2005

A LOOK BACK AT THE BEST OF THE BEST

By Gavin Evans

It all started about the time the troops were coming home from the Second World War. Nat Fleischer, founding editor of THE RING, decided it was time for a new award.

The game needed a bit of a boost right then because it was experiencing a sparse spell, with most of the fighting men otherwise engaged. So, having invented the idea of world ratings and the Fighter of the Year Award in 1928, Fleischer handed out the first Fight of the Year award in 1945.

THE RING was hardly overloaded with choices, but still, the winner must have been a bit of a mild surprise—a 10-round war between wild young middleweight contender Rocky Graziano and previously over-protected welterweight champion Freddie Cochrane.

The point being made right from the start is that THE RING Fight of the Year award went to just that: the best scrap in the previous 12 months, regardless of the status of the warriors involved.

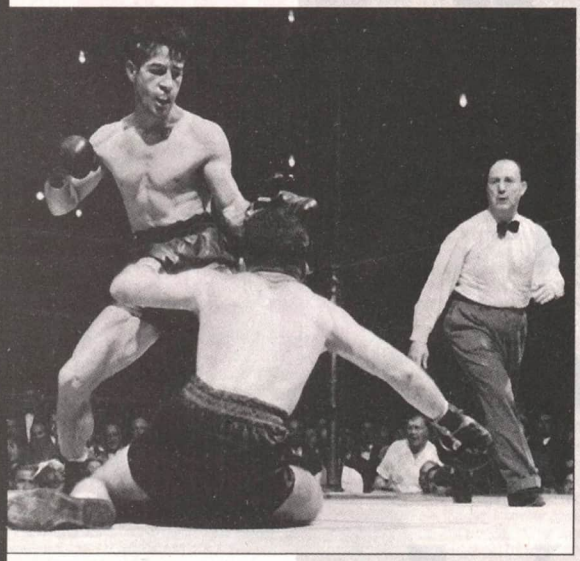
And that, more or less, has been the formula ever since. True, there have been some odd choices—Marcel Cerdan's one-sided battering of Tony Zale in 1948 was more a prolonged mugging than a fight; Jimmy Young's slip-sliding victory over George Foreman was a huge upset, but hardly a vicious struggle, and would Spinks-Ali I really have made it without the name Muhammad Ali attached?

In some years, the competition was more intense than others, which has meant that some magnificent fights have been left out. A few that leap to mind: Ray Robinson-Randy Turpin II, Roberto Duran-Ray Leonard I, Larry Holmes-Ken Norton, Alexis Arguello-Alfredo Escalara I, Pryor-Arguello I, Buster Douglas-Mike Tyson, Julian Jackson-Herol Graham, Evander Holyfield-Dwight Qawi 1, Arturo Gatti-Wilson Rodriguez, Naseem Hamed-Kevin Kelley, Ricardo Lopez-Resendo Alvarez II, Felix Trinidad-Fernando Vargas, and Shane Mosley-Oscar De La Hoya I.

Perhaps even more surprising is the number of great fighters never featured in THE RING's Fight of the Year—from Joe Louis to Lennox Lewis—and the number of, let's say, lesser fighters who have been featured quite regularly. The great and not-so-great fighters with the most appearances are: Ali (6), Carmen Basilio (5 in five years), Joe Frazier (4), Arturo Gatti (4), Micky Ward (3), Rocky Graziano (3), and Rocky Marciano (3).

So there you have it: 61 mostly magnificent fights, ranging from intense, slam-bang blowouts like the eight minutes of Hagler-Hearns to prolonged wars of attrition like the 30 rounds Robinson and Basilio spent in each other's company. All well worth remembering and celebrating in this special section.

1945 ROCKY GRAZIANO KO 10 FREDDIE "RED" COCHRANE
June 29, New York City



Graziano floors Cochrane

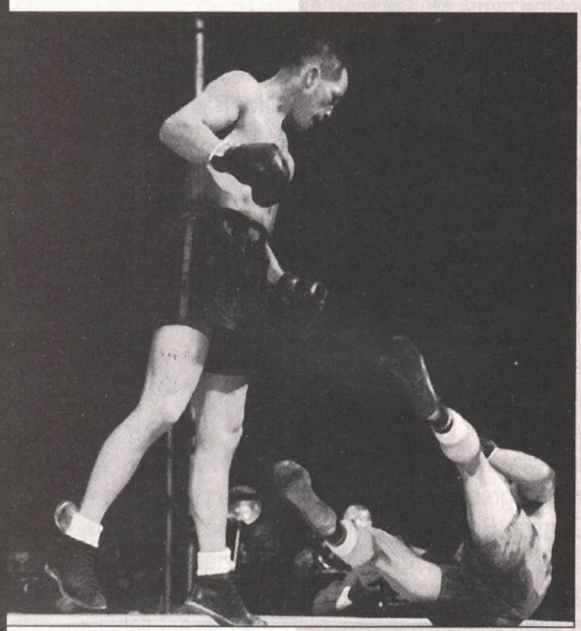
Setting the stage: World War II had just ended and Cochrane, 30, was world welterweight champion, but, frankly, no great shakes. He won the title via questionable decision over Fritzie Zivic (who spanked him in a non-title return) and held on through wartime service in the Navy (as a non-combatant; he was born with one arm shorter than the other) and a reluctance to defend it. Graziano, 23, whose troubled past included a spell in prison for going AWOL during the war, had picked up three knockouts since losing a pair of decisions to Harold Green.

What happened: The 5'7", 142-pound Cochrane easily outboxed the 5'7", 153-pound Graziano, jabbing and moving as the bombs of the younger man swished past. But, in the final seconds of round nine, Graziano struck with a monstrous right to the jaw and Cochrane was put to sleep. He was saved by the bell (in those days the count stopped when it clanged) and revived by his corner, but he needed hours rather than seconds. Graziano jumped right on him, and, after 16 seconds of round 10, "Red" was counted out.

Other candidates: Graziano KO 3 Billy Arnold, Ike Williams KO 2 Juan Zurita, Archie Moore W 10 Lloyd Marshall, Ray Robinson W 10 Jake LaMotta

Why Graziano-Cochrane won: Smaller veteran outboxes hot young slugger, and then, a dramatic turn-around, followed by a clean knockout.

1946 TONY ZALE KO 6 ROCKY GRAZIANO
September 27, New York City



Zale rallies to flatten Graziano

Setting the stage: These two weren't the world's two best middleweights (take a posthumous bow, Charlie Burley), but they were certainly the most exciting. Zale, 33, a potent bodypuncher with the ability to absorb inhuman punishment, had ruled as undisputed champion since 1941, but the war had taken away almost four of those years, and this was his first defense. Graziano, 24, was a thrill-a-minute brawler who came with a Horatio Alger biography.

What happened: The "Man Of Steel" struck first, his right securing an early knockdown, but after that the relentless Graziano took over. Zale was down late in the second, wobbled several times, suffered a broken right thumb, but he kept throwing draining bodyblows. The fight turned in the sixth when an apparently wobbly Zale landed a vicious right to the stomach. Graziano went down, got up, and was sent down again by a left hook. He just failed to beat referee Ruby Goldstein's count, although he wanted to fight on. Zale, who had to be held up by his seconds, "looked like a man who had been in hand-to-hand combat with a buzz saw," Associated Press reported.

Other candidates: Marcel Cerdan W 10 Georgie Abrams, Ezzard Charles W 10 Archie Moore, Willie Pep KO 12 Sal Bartolo, Ray Robinson KO 10 Artie Levin

Why Zale-Graziano won: All-action slugfest between two of the sport's biggest hitters, with a sudden turnaround and a decisive conclusion.

ROCKY GRAZIANO KO 6 TONY ZALE
July 16, Chicago, Illinois
1947

Setting the stage: Graziano once again had trouble outside the ring after losing to Zale in 1946—this time having his license revoked by the New York commission for failing to report a bribe offer to throw a fight. But the National Boxing Association refused to recognize the ban, so the fight went ahead in Chicago. Zale had picked up five knockout wins since their first fight, Graziano two.

What happened: Fighting in oven-like conditions in an indoor arena, Zale picked up where he'd left off, dominating with his superior skills and straighter punches. He dropped Graziano in the third, gashed his left eye and almost closed the right, but the crowd-pleasing Italian-American kept coming. In round six, Graziano unleashed a furious two-fisted attack, driving the exhausted champion into the ropes. Graziano fired 30 unanswered punches until, as Zale collapsed, referee Johnny Behr stopped the fight. "This was no boxing match," said Rocky in his autobiography. "It was a war, and if there wasn't a referee, one or the two of us would have wound up dead."

Other candidates: Ike Williams KO 6 Bob Montgomery, Marcel Cerdan W 10 Anton Raadik, Joe Louis W 15 Jersey Joe Walcott, Ezzard Charles W 10 Archie Moore, Ray Robinson W 10 Georgie Abrams

Why Graziano-Zale won: It was a virtual carbon copy of their first thriller, with the 100-plus degree indoor heat an added ingredient. One of the all-time greats.

Graziano takes middleweight title from Zale

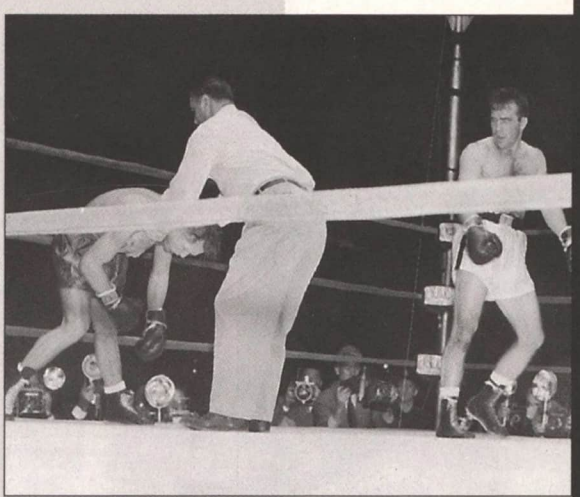
MARCEL CERDAN KO 12 TONY ZALE
September 21, Jersey City, New Jersey
1948

Setting the stage: Zale regained the world middleweight title three months earlier with a one-sided, three-round knockout of Graziano. The powerful, big-hitting Cerdan made his name in America by winning a thriller against Georgie Abrams in '46, having already beaten several top men, including Holman Williams, on home soil, but he had to wait until Zale completed his Graziano trilogy before getting his chance. At 32, Cerdan was a bit past his prime, but was still three years younger than Zale.

What happened: The 5'8" Algeria-born, Morocco-raised Frenchman was far too powerful for the jaded 5'8" American, who absorbed a one-sided battering. Cerdan applied relentless pressure from behind a tight guard, and Zale simply had no viable answer. And yet, once again, the "Man Of Steel" showed heroic courage in his ability to withstand horrific punishment. Finally, late in round 11, the badly bruised Zale fell from a left hook to the jaw. He was saved by the bell, but was unable to come out for the 12th, and the 160-pound title changed hands.

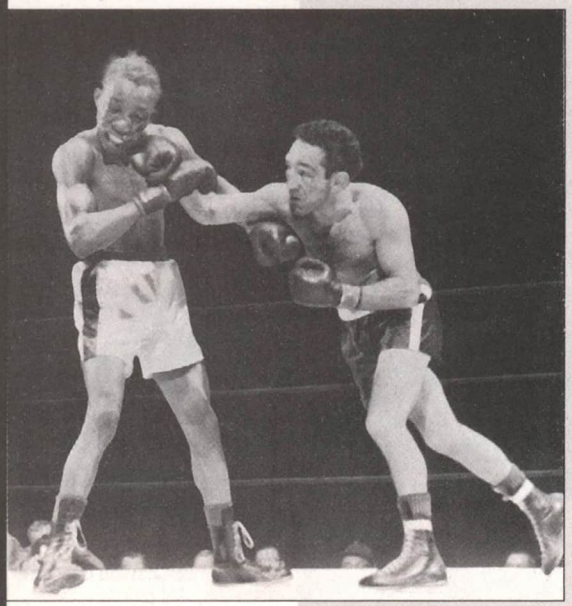
Other candidates: Joe Louis KO 13 Jersey Joe Walcott, Ezzard Charles KO 8 Archie Moore, Freddie Mills W 15 Gus Lesnevich, Sandy Saddler KO 4 Willie Pep, Ray Robinson W 10 Kid Gavilan

Why Cerdan-Zale won: Partly as a tribute to Zale's immense courage in withstanding such brutally unrelenting torture for so long. Even so, an odd choice.



Cerdan is too much for faded Zale

1949 WILLIE PEP W 15 SANDY SADDLER
February 11, New York City



Pep drills Saddler with a right

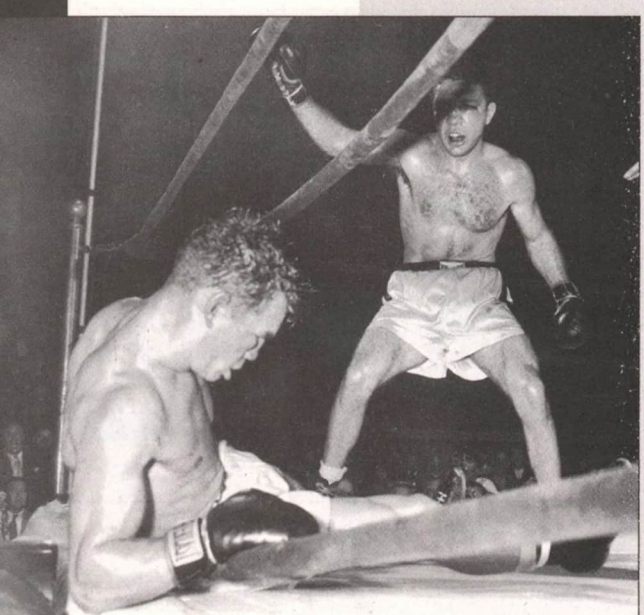
Setting the stage: Two years earlier, Pep was severely injured in a plane crash, suffering fractured vertebrae and a broken leg, but he confounded the dire prognosis by returning to the ring five months later. Still, he seemed not quite the force of old, and in October 1948 was knocked out in four by Saddler, losing the featherweight title. Pep, 26, trained harder for the return.

What happened: No featherweight could match the strength and power of the 5'8 ", 23-year-old Saddler, but no boxer could match the speed and defensive brilliance of the 5'5" Pep. All his skills were on display in this one—quick sidestepping, feinting, parrying, slipping, sharp countering, and a dose of the rough stuff. Pep landed 37 flush jabs in the opening round, but in round two, Saddler opened a cut around his right eye. But Pep rallied to rattle him by landing 13 punches without reply. Saddler wobbled his tormenter in the ninth and 10th and dished out a beating in the 14th, but the weary former champion came back to edge an intense 15th and take the decision by scores of 10-5, 9-5, and 9-6.

Other candidates: Kid Gavilan W 10 Ike Williams, Ezzard Charles W 15 Jersey Joe Walcott, Ray Robinson W 15 Kid Gavilan

Why Pep-Saddler won: It was "Will O' The Wisp" at his brilliant best, stretched to the limit by the always-dangerous Saddler.

1950 JAKE LaMOTTA KO 15 LAURENT DAUTHUILLE
September 13, Detroit, Michigan



LaMotta comes back from the brink to kayo Dauthuille

Setting the stage: At best, Dauthuille was a reasonably skilful 26-year-old Frenchman who had suffered seven losses in the previous three years. But he seemed to have LaMotta's number and had easily outpointing him in '49. The 29-year-old "Bronx Bull" was making his second defense of the world middleweight title and was a 2-1 favorite, but he'd been beaten in a non-title fight 10 months earlier and had severe weight problems.

What happened: For 14 rounds, the 5'7" Dauthuille used his superior speed to outbox the 5'8" LaMotta, cutting and bruising his face with sharp, straight punches. He led by margins of eight, four, and two points going into the 15th round. All Dauthuille had to do was to last three minutes and the title would go back to France. For the first 2½ minutes, that's the way it looked—until the Frenchman became overconfident, suckered by LaMotta's possum act. The Bronx Bull exploded off the ropes, bringing huge hooks up from the floor to send his rival reeling. Finally, Dauthuille went down and with 13 seconds left on the clock was counted out.

Other candidates: Ezzard Charles W 15 Joe Louis, Sandy Saddler KO 8 Willie Pep, Joey Maxim KO 10 Freddie Mills, Rocky Marciano W 10 Roland LaStarza

Why LaMotta-Dauthuille won: Perhaps the greatest come-from-behind victory in boxing history and proof positive that it's never over until it's over.

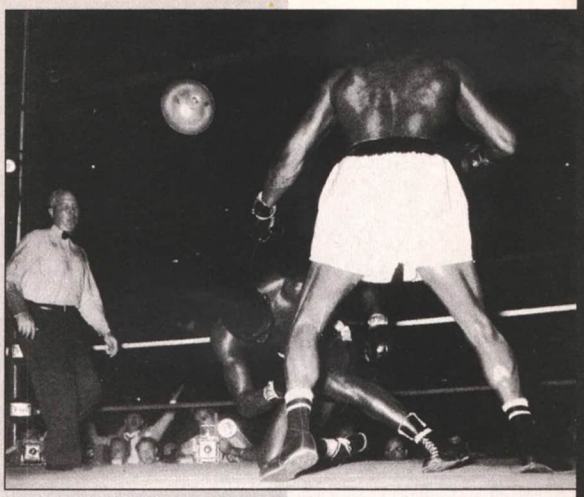
JERSEY JOE WALCOTT KO 7 EZZARD CHARLES
July 18, Pittsburgh, Pennsylvania
1951

Setting the stage: Charles, the 30-year-old heavyweight champ, was past his peak, but very few gave Jersey Joe a chance. The "Cincinnati Cobra" had beaten him twice before, the last time, four months earlier, with a nine-count knockdown thrown in. Before that, Walcott lost a wide decision to Rex Layne. Now in his 38th year, he was clearly on the slide.

What happened: Walcott, busier and more aggressive than usual, shaded the early rounds as Charles struggled to get into his rhythm. Early in round seven Walcott ambled forward, rolling both gloves as if suggesting a choice. Charles watched the right and threw a jab, but the old man slipped it and landed a perfect left hook counter to the side of the jaw. Charles staggered, mouth open, and fell to his knees before collapsing onto his stomach, where he was counted out. "I don't know what it was tonight, but he seemed more aggressive than ever," Charles said an hour later.

Other candidates: Sugar Ray Robinson KO 13 Jake LaMotta, Ray Robinson KO 10 Randy Turpin, Rocky Marciano KO 8 Joe Louis, Vic Toweel W 15 Manuel Ortiz, Kid Gavilan W 15 Johnny Bratton

Why Walcott-Charles won: Walcott's age and his achievement in winning the heavyweight crown on his fifth attempt, but also that final punch was one of the most devastating left hooks ever thrown—a knockout as clean and decisive as they come.



Walcott finally figures out how to beat Charles

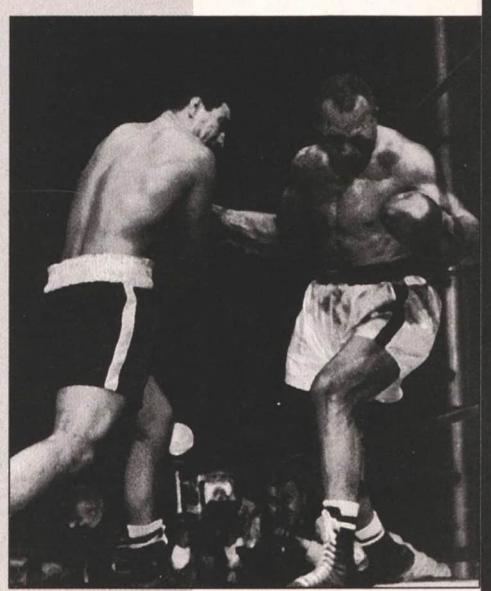
ROCKY MARCIANO KO 13 JERSEY JOE WALCOTT
September 23, Philadelphia, Pennsylvania
1952

Setting the stage: Walcott, nearing 39 (perhaps more), was, at the time, the oldest heavyweight champion in history. He'd managed one defense in 14 months: a disputed decision over Ezzard Charles. The 29-year-old Marciano had picked up six knockout wins in this spell. Still, Jersey Joe was confident: "If I can't beat this bum, take my name out of the record books," he sneered.

What happened: After 40 seconds, Marciano was on his back, courtesy of a left hook. The 6', 196-pound Walcott retained the edge with quick counterpunching and an ability to battle off the ropes, but the 5'10", 184-pound Marciano was throwing bombs at the champion's body and arms, along with low blows and butts (opening a gash near Walcott's left eye). In the 11th, the older man turned aggressor, landing six unanswered blows. Marciano, his vision impaired by astringent solution, was wobbled again in the 12th. Behind by three rounds on two judge's cards, and two on the third, he beat Walcott to the punch in round 13, reaching that ancient jaw with his "Susie Q" right. Jersey Joe's head twisted around and he slumped, collapsing on one knee, and then landing on his face to be counted out.

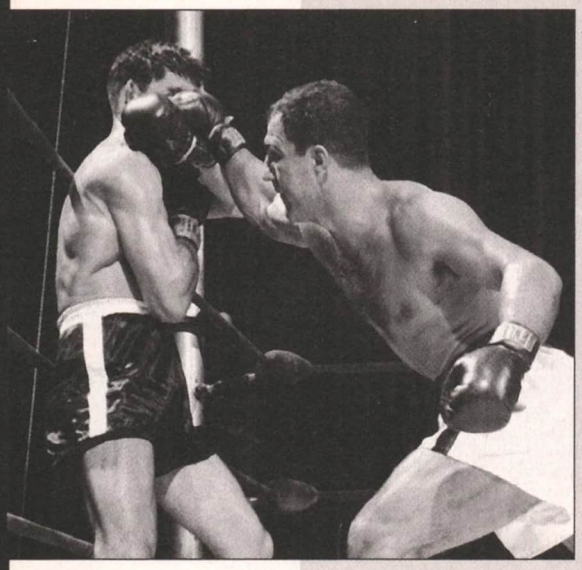
Other candidates: Ray Robinson KO 3 Rocky Graziano, Danny Nardico KO 8 Jake LaMotta, Archie Moore W 15 Joey Maxim

Why Marciano-Walcott won: Stirring battle, with Marciano coming from behind to end it with a devastating one-punch knockout.



Marciano has Walcott in serious trouble

1953 ROCKY MARCIANO KO 11 ROLAND LaSTARZA
September 24, New York City



LaStarza absorbs a right from marauding Marciano

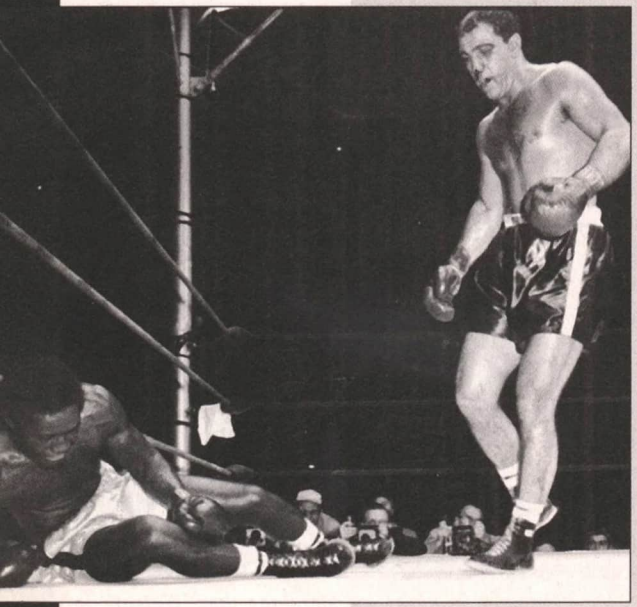
Setting the stage: They first fought in 1950 when Marciano scored a knockdown in round four, but lost a point for low blows in round eight and was outboxed for long stretches. The scoring was 5-4-1, 4-5-1, and 5-5, but Marciano got the nod on the "supplemental points" system used in New York State at the time. LaStarza insisted he was robbed and there were unproven claims that the mob connections of Al Weill (Marciano's manager) swayed it. In the interim, there were signs that the 26-year-old LaStarza, who dropped two decisions, was slipping.

What happened: LaStarza, one pound lighter at 184, frustrated the heavyweight champ with slick movement and well-timed combinations. When pinned, he would tie up or throw a few stiff punches and then slide away. Marciano became frustrated and resorted to foul tactics. His trainer, Charley Goldman, suggested a different approach: "Bang his arms until he brings them down." So, Marciano beat LaStarza's arms until he could barely lift his gloves. By round 11, Marciano had moved into the lead on two of the three cards. He launched a brutal attack, driving his challenger through the ropes and forcing referee Ruby Goldstein to wave it off. LaStarza required surgery for chipped bones in his elbows and ruptured blood vessels in his forearms.

Other candidates: Kid Gavilan KO 10 Chuck Davey, Carmen Basilio W 10 Ike Williams, Kid Gavilan W 15 Carmen Basilio

Why Marciano-LaStarza: Classic boxer-versus-brawler combination, this time with a decisive ending.

1954 ROCKY MARCIANO KO 8 EZZARD CHARLES
September 17, New York City



Wounded Marciano put Charles away in the eighth

Setting the stage: Charles had long been in decline, losing five of his previous 16. A decisive defeat against Nino Valdes in 1953 seemed to rule him out, but, 10 months later, he held Marciano to a close decision. Previously considered chinny (dropped 20 times by then), the "Cincinnati Cobra" stood up to the "Brockton Blockbuster's" blows without going down. Now age 33, after a career spanning 14 years and 90 fights, he was up for his third chance at regaining the title he'd lost to Walcott.

What happened: Charles reverted to type, jabbing and moving, but was down for a two-count in the second and falling behind. Then, in the sixth, he sliced open Marciano's nose down to the bone with a left and then cut the champion's left eye. Marciano was told by the doctor he'd be pulled out after one more round. They met in ring center with Charles landing first and sending blood flying. But "The Rock" kept firing huge punches until his tormentor went down for a three-count. Marciano landed several more monster blows, ending with a left hook to the jaw, and Charles collapsed for the full count, 24 seconds short of salvation.

Other candidates: Marciano W 15 Ezzard Charles, Carl "Bobo" Olson W 15 Kid Gavilan, Pascual Perez W 15 Yoshi Shirai, Archie Moore KO 14 Harold Johnson, Jimmy Carter KO 15 Paddy De Marco

Why Marciano-Charles won: Dramatic ending, with Rocky rescuing the title when on the verge of defeat.

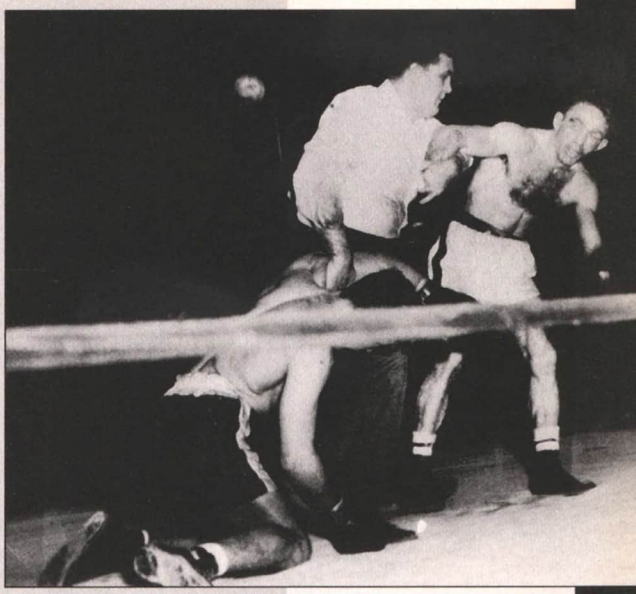
CARMEN BASILIO KO 12 TONY DeMARCO
November 30, Boston, Massachusetts | 1955

Setting the stage: These two met in a memorable war in June with DeMarco, the rampaging new world welterweight champion, setting a remarkable pace before getting stopped in the 12th. Basilio already had 11 losses, but he was unbeaten in his last 14 since dropping a split decision to Kid Gavilan.

What happened: The 5'5", 23-year-old Bostonian came storming out, throwing long lefts to the head. Both men were converted southpaws and both broke their left hands early in the fight. In round five, DeMarco, bleeding from the nose and left eye, landed a left hook that wobbled the 28-year-old Canastota, New York, onion farmer. He piled in wildly, wasting punches. He nearly dropped Basilio in the seventh and eighth, but all the time the 5'6" champ was working away at his body. In the 12th, a worn-out De Marco absorbed five rights and sank to the canvas. He was up at eight, but Basilio landed a left hook and a big right. DeMarco collapsed as referee Mel Manning waved it off at the 1:54 mark (two seconds later than in their first fight).

Other candidates: Carmen Basilio KO 12 Tony DeMarco I, Rocky Marciano KO 9 Archie Moore, Archie Moore KO 3 Carl "Bobo" Olson

Why Basilio-DeMarco II won: Cracking pace, with DeMarco building up a wide lead before running out of steam and suffering brutal knockout.



The ref rescues DeMarco from rampaging Basilio

CARMEN BASILIO KO 9 JOHNNY SAXTON
September 12, Syracuse, New York | 1956

Setting the stage: Six months earlier, Basilio had lost the world welterweight title to Saxton on a highly dubious decision, the second time the mob-backed Newark man had won the crown via controversial verdict (in 1954 he was given the nod against Kid Gavilan). Saxton had squeezed in three non-title wins, while Basilio had taken a rest.

What happened: There were rumors the judges had been paid off in their first fight, so Basilio left nothing to chance, tearing into the 5'8", 26-year-old champion from the opening bell. He shook Saxton with three left hooks in the first, conceded the second, and then resumed his dominance in the third before opening a cut over the left eyebrow in round four. Basilio continued to set a fast pace, working the body incessantly, with plenty of stiff hooks to the head thrown in. By the seventh, Saxton was bleeding from the mouth and fighting in retreat. Basilio hammered him to the ribs in the eighth and then finished him off with a left hook at the 1:31 mark of the ninth.

Other candidates: Floyd Patterson KO 5 Archie Moore, Larry Boardman W 10 Bud Smith, Ray Robinson KO 4 Carl "Bobo" Olson, Gene Fullmer W 10 Charles Humez

Why Basilio-Saxton: Decisive revenge after controversial title loss earlier that year. Saxton had his moments, but was overwhelmed by the intensity of Basilio's attack.

Basilio gets his revenge against Saxton

1957 CARMEN BASILIO W 15 RAY ROBINSON
September 23, New York City

Basilio celebrates victory over Robinson

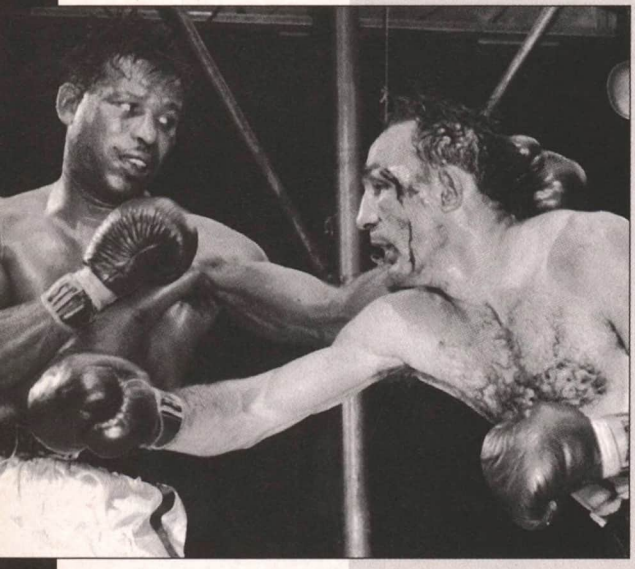
Setting the stage: Robinson regained the world middleweight title in May by knocking out Gene Fullmer in five, and despite his age (36) was a clear favorite to beat the world welterweight champion. Since regaining the 147-pound title, Basilio, 30, had picked up two more stoppage wins, including a second-round rubber match drubbing of Johnny Saxton.

What happened: Giving away five inches in height and six pounds, the welterweight champion tore into the middleweight king, setting a torrid pace as he attacked the body. Sugar Ray lacked the speed and reflexes of old, but was prepared to stand and trade when he couldn't keep the younger man away with his jab. He hurt Basilio several times, cut his nose and cheek, and landed blistering combinations to take an early lead, but the smaller, younger man kept coming, winging those hooks to drive Robinson back. He hurt the champ with a right in the 10th and battered him on the ropes several times. All three judges gave Basilio the final round, enough to secure a split decision victory. Referee Al Berl gave it to Robinson by 9-6, but was overruled by the two judges who had it 8-6 and 9-5 for Basilio.

Other candidates: Gene Fullmer W 15 Ray Robinson, Ray Robinson KO 5 Fullmer, Floyd Patterson KO 5 Pete Rademacher

Why Basilio-Robinson won: Intense, give-and-take, evenly matched 15-round battle, involving high levels of skill and power as well as intense commitment from both men.

1958 RAY ROBINSON W 15 CARMEN BASILIO
March 25, Chicago, Illinois



Bloody Basilio wades into Robinson

Setting the stage: The grudge element set in. Basilio resented Sugar Ray's refusal to acknowledge that he'd been hurt in their first fight. "Robinson wouldn't tell the truth to God," he sneered. Robinson hated the idea he'd been bettered by a welterweight, and despite a viral infection on the eve of the fight, he was set on securing revenge at any cost.

What happened: There was no feeling out; both men tore at each other, throwing punches, elbows, and low blows. They battled on even terms until a hard left hook closed Basilio's left eye in the fifth round. He continued to attack and never stopped throwing punches, but he could not see Robinson's right and was therefore taking more than he was dishing out. Robinson surged into the lead, but by the later rounds age was taking its toll, and the one-eyed champion started to close the gap. By the end, both men were exhausted, and once again the decision was split. The two judges gave it to Robinson (by seven and eight points), but referee Frank Sikora made Basilio a three-point victor.

Other candidates: Archie Moore KO 11 Yvonne Durelle, Hogan "Kid" Bassey KO 9 Willie Pep, Virgil Akins KO 12 Tony DeMarco

Why Robinson-Basilio won: Once again, an intense, close 15-rounder, this one with the added elements of their foul-filled opening round and Basilio's eye injury. Sugar Ray secured the middleweight crown for the fifth time.

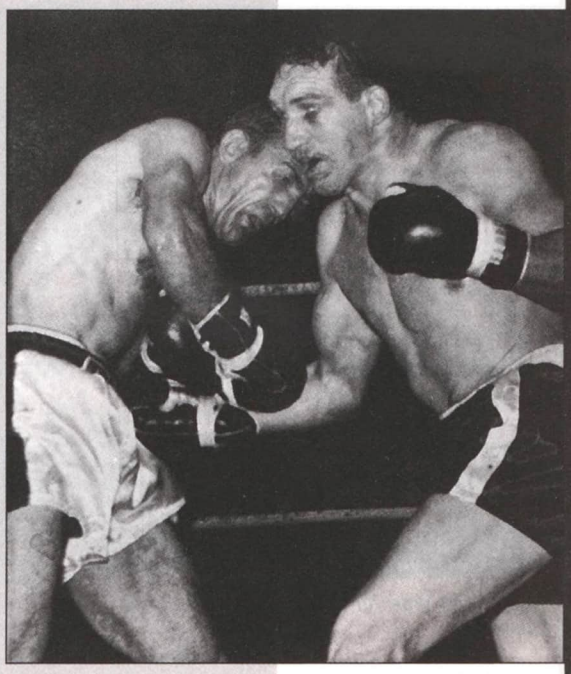
GENE FULLMER KO 14 CARMEN BASILIO
August 28, San Francisco, California
1959

Setting the stage: Fullmer had won nine straight after losing his title to Ray Robinson. Basilio had picked up two stoppage wins since losing his title to Robinson, and was a slight betting favorite. This one was for the vacant NBA middleweight title (stripped from Robinson for inactivity).

What happened: Both were relentless brawlers, but Fullmer, 28, had several advantages—four years younger, three pounds heavier, one inch taller. He boxed aggressively, but instead of flailing away, he used his jab more than usual, pounded the body, and conserved his strength. Each round was compelling, but Fullmer was getting the last word in most exchanges. Basilio shaded the first, sixth, and seventh, but was doubled over by a brutal hook to the body in the eighth. He kept fighting back, but was taking a beating. Early in the 14th, Fullmer, whose left eye was virtually closed, landed a vicious right to the jaw that sent the teetering Basilio to the ropes. Six bombs later, Angelo Dundee started climbing into the ring, which prompted referee Jack Downey to stop it. Fullmer was ahead by four, eight, and nine points. "Fullmer kicked the hell out of me," Basilio admitted.

Other candidates: Davey Moore KO 14 Hogan "Kid" Bassey, Sonny Liston KO 3 Cleveland Williams, Ingemar Johansson KO 3 Floyd Patterson, Don Jordan W 15 Virgil Akins

Why Fullmer-Basilio won: Fullmer always had the edge, but it was still intensely competitive, a high-class, high-intensity slugfest.



Fullmer digs to Basilio's body

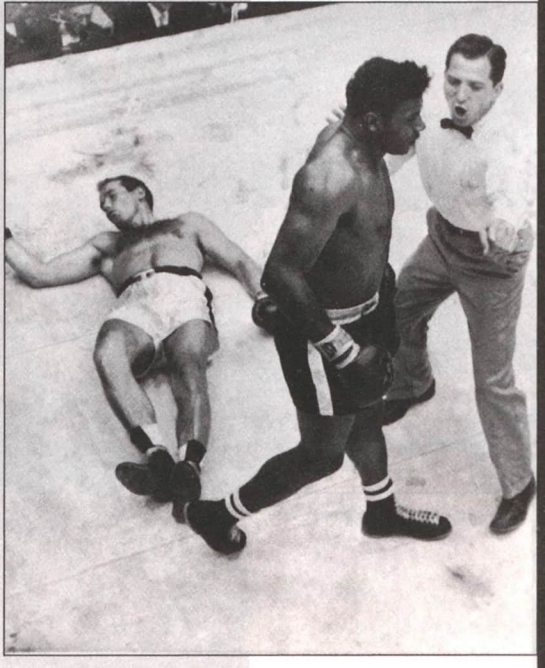
FLOYD PATTERSON KO 5 INGEMAR JOHANSSON
June 20, New York City
1960

Setting the stage: A year earlier, Johansson—considered a softer touch than Zora Folley, Cleveland Williams, and Sonny Liston—demolished Patterson in three, dropping him seven times. Training for the return, the 25-year-old American was attacked by a knifeman. He blocked the thrust with his right hand and knocked the assailant cold with his left hook, after which he drove to camp, telling his trainer, Cus D'Amato, he'd accidentally cut his hand. The 27-year-old Johansson, an 8-5 favorite, was less focused, preferring the party circuit to the gym.

What happened: The 190-pound Patterson (eight pounds heavier than in their first fight) boxed aggressively but never recklessly, careful to avoid the champ's "Hammer Of Thor" right hand. For four rounds, he kept his conqueror away with his jab while stepping in with rapid-fire combinations. Johansson, 194, kept pitching, but never landed cleanly. Early in round five, Patterson landed a perfectly timed left hook, followed by a right, and Johansson went down for a nine-count. Patterson finished him with another left hook, and Johansson was counted out, his right leg twitching as blood trickled from his mouth.

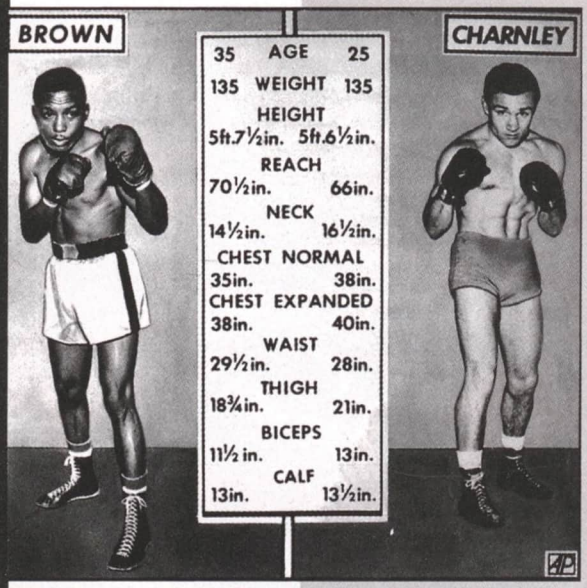
Other candidates: Pone Kingpetch W 15 Pascual Perez, Gene Fullmer D 15 Joey Giardello, Gene Fullmer D 15 Ray Robinson, Eder Jofre KO 6 Eloy Sanchez

Why Patterson-Johansson won: Patterson became the first-ever heavyweight champion to regain the title—with one of the finest left hooks and most decisive knockouts in boxing history.



Patterson levels Johansson to regain heavyweight title

1961 JOE BROWN W 15 DAVE CHARNLEY
April 18, London, England



Tale of the tape for Brown-Charnley

Setting the stage: This pair first met in 1959 and it was shaping up as a thriller until Charnley was stopped due to a cut right eye after five rounds. Brown, 33, then lost a couple of non-title bouts and was showing signs of slippage, while Charnley, 25, won five straight and had reached his peak.

What happened: Brown, a broad-shouldered, 5'7" stylist with a classic left jab, an impressive array of combinations, and a potent right liked to work at range. He was perfectly matched against Charnley, a squat, square-on, terrier-like southpaw, who liked to work up-close because he had short arms. Brown started strongly, cutting Charnley on the bridge of the nose, but the relentless Englishman never stopped coming, wearing down the older man with his steady tattoo of hard punches. He dominated the later rounds until the exhausted "Old Bones" was hanging on. The scoring referee, Tommy Little, almost caused a riot when he raised Brown's hand (making him a winner by one round) and had to be escorted from the ring. The British press was in unanimous agreement that Charnley deserved it.

Other candidates: Gene Fullmer W 15 Ray Robinson, Floyd Patterson KO 6 Ingemar Johansson, Emile Griffith KO 13 Benny "Kid" Paret, Gene Fullmer KO 10 Benny "Kid" Paret

Why Brown-Charnley won: An extremely close and highly competitive 15-rounder involving non-stop action and a classic blend of styles.

1962 JOEY GIARDELLO W 10 HENRY HANK
January 30, Philadelphia, Pennsylvania

Giardello hooks Hank

Setting the stage: This was a return encounter—the Detroit-based Hank having beaten Giardello via unanimous decision in the "Motor City" six months earlier. Hank had since picked up three wins and a draw, and Giardello two wins and a draw. Giardello, 31, was unlucky to get only a draw in a title fight against middleweight boss Gene Fullmer in 1960, but this time he was fighting in his own backyard.

What happened: The 27-year-old Hank opened with a fierce, two-fisted attack, but the slick, long-range Giardello came back in the second, and shaded most of the early rounds with his persistent jab. In the second half, however, the younger man used his advantages in strength and power to close the gap, always making sure of an extra effort in the closing seconds of each bitterly contested round. By the end, the homeboy was pouring blood from his right eye, nose, and mouth, and certainly looked like a beaten man. One judge called it for Giardello by three points, the other made it a draw, and the referee, Joe Sweeney, made Giardello a one-point winner, prompting boos from Joey's hometown crowd. Harry Baxter, Hank's manager, called it the worst decision in his ring experience.

Other candidates: Dick Tiger W 15 Gene Fullmer, Freddie Gilroy KO 9 Johnny Caldwell, Fighting Harada KO 11 Pone Kingpetch

Why Giardello-Hank won: As THE RING put it: "It was vicious. It was bloody. It was thrilling. And it became highly controversial."

CASSIUS CLAY W 10 DOUG JONES
March 13, New York City

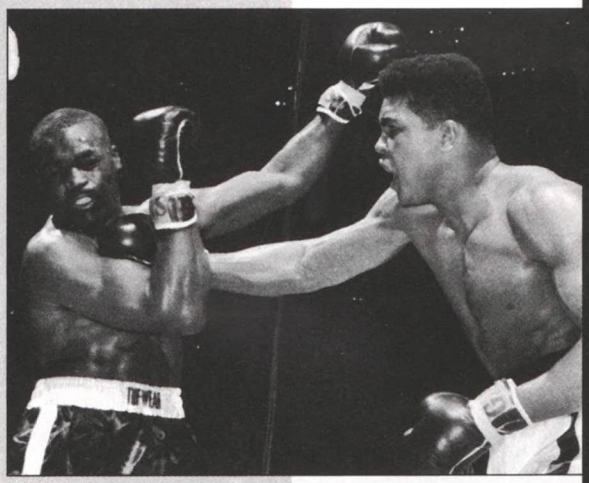
1963

Setting the stage: The 21-year-old "Louisville Lip" was making his push for the top. He initially predicted a sixth-round demise for Jones, the number-three heavyweight contender who was coming off stoppage wins over Bob Foster and Zora Folley and had reached his peak at the age of 26. Clay called him a "bum" and said, "I'm changing the pick I made before. Instead of six, Doug goes in four."

What happened: The 188-pound Jones was giving away 14 pounds and three inches, but made an immediate impression by staggering the brash youngster with a right in the first round. Jones was the fastest man Clay had fought, and one of the strongest, but Clay's footwork, timing, and great jab helped him edge several of the close rounds. He became frustrated after failing to fulfill his prediction, and Jones kept on troubling him by landing rights. Two judges gave it to Clay by a single point, but referee Joe Loscalzo, ludicrously, gave him eight of the 10 rounds. Clay explained his missed prediction: "First I called it six, then I called it four. Four and six, that's 10, right?"

Other candidates: Dick Tiger KO 8 Gene Fullmer, Cassius Clay KO 5 Henry Cooper, Luis Rodriguez W 15 Emile Griffith

Why Clay-Jones won: Jones came extremely close to pulling off an upset with a spirited performance, and together he and Clay filled Madison Square Garden, a rare occurrence in the early-'60s.



Clay clocks Jones with a right

CASSIUS CLAY KO 7 SONNY LISTON
February 25, Miami Beach, Florida

1964

Setting the stage: Clay had made it a business to taunt "The Big, Ugly Bear" (officially 31 but probably 36), but Liston, a 7-1 favorite, felt he was in for a short night's work, a view reinforced when Clay's pulse rate rose to 110 during a hysterical weigh-in. In the background were the Nation of Islam, the mob, and rumors of a fix.

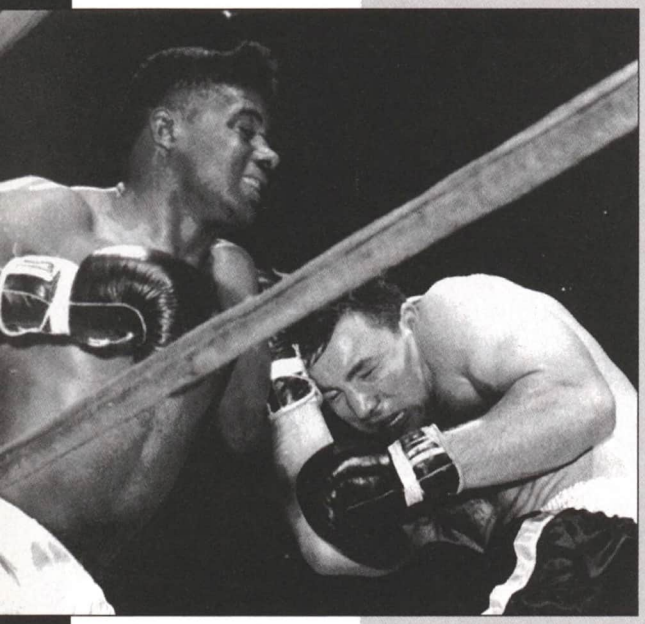
What happened: Clay evaded the attacks of the poorly conditioned Liston, who was two inches shorter but held a five-inch reach advantage. Liston hurt him with a big left hook in the second, but Clay attacked in flurries in the third, leaving a mouse under Liston's right eye and a cut under the left. Late in round four, Clay began pawing his eyes, the result of a foreign substance on Liston's gloves. Angelo Dundee ignored Clay's panicked instructions to "cut off the gloves," and Clay stayed out of range until his eyes cleared. He opened up in the sixth, after which the fight was even on the cards. Liston refused to come out for round seven, complaining of an injured shoulder. The new champion screamed: "I am the greatest! I'm the king of the world!"

Other candidates: Carlos Ortiz KO 14 Flash Elorde, Emile Griffith W 15 Luis Rodriguez, Vicente Saldivar KO 12 Sugar Ramos

Why Clay-Liston won: Packed with drama, a close and exciting fight while it lasted, it produced one of the great upsets in boxing history and began the reign of "The Greatest."

Clay jabs Liston

1965 FLOYD PATTERSON W 12 GEORGE CHUVALO
February 1, New York City



Patterson rips into Chuvalo

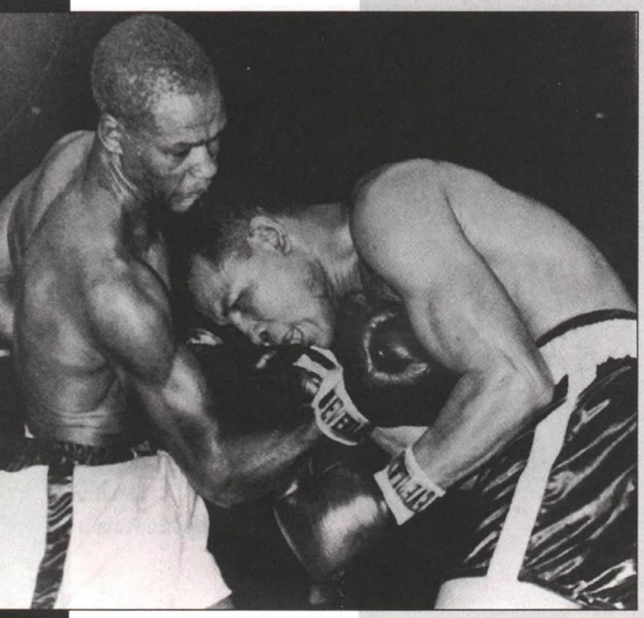
Setting the stage: The 30-year-old Patterson was having his first American outing since being flattened for the second time by Sonny Liston. He came in at a career-high of 197 pounds, but was outweighed by 10 pounds by the hardheaded, 27-year-old Canadian, who had won his last four on knockouts, including an 11th-round TKO of Doug Jones.

What happened: The quick-handed two-time former world champion landed some blistering combinations and used his jab to good effect, but his famed left hook, which had seen off 10 of his previous 11 victims, seemed to bounce off the perpetually aggressive opponent. Chuvalo kept plowing forward, landing heavy hooks to Patterson's body, while also getting occasional stiff rights through the former champion's peek-a-boo guard. Patterson was badly wobbled in the exciting 10th round, and seemed out on his feet, before coming back strongly over the final six minutes to take a close but clear and popular decision by margins of 6-5-1, 8-4, and 7-5.

Other candidates: Flash Elorde W 10 Frankie Narvaez, Fighting Harada W 15 Eder Jofre, Jose Medel W 15 Jesus Pimental, Richard Sue W 12 Rafiu King

Why Patterson-Chuvalo won: For a heavyweight fight, this one was fought at a very brisk pace, with the perfect blend of styles between the heavy-handed Canadian and the quick-fisted American. There were few clinches and the action never subsided. Patterson proved his previously doubted courage in the torrid 10th.

1966 JOSE TORRES W 15 EDDIE COTTON
August 15, Las Vegas, Nevada



Cotton drives a right to Torres' chest

Setting the stage: Torres, 30, was making the third defense of the world light heavyweight title he'd won by knocking out Willie Pastrano 15 months earlier—and he'd also raised his standing with a venture to heavyweight to outclass former contender Tom McNeely. Cotton, a 39-year-old veteran in his 20th professional year, dropped a split decision to Harold Johnson in his previous title bid five years before, and saw this as his final shot at glory.

What happened: The 6' veteran used his advantages in size and strength to take the fight to the more cautious Puerto Rican stylist, fighting with purposeful aggression throughout. Torres, who two years earlier had still been a middleweight, was driven back, but his Cus D'Amato-patented peek-a-boo guard, sharp reflexes, and quick hands kept it competitive the whole way. Cotton worked the body incessantly; Torres did good work with sharp counters to the head. Going into the 15th, most ringsiders had "Chegui" behind, but he delivered a storming finish to eke out a close, unanimous decision over the fading old-timer, winning by margins of one, two, and three points.

Other candidates: Carlos Ortiz KO 5 Sugar Ramos, Muhammad Ali KO 12 Karl Mildenberger, Curtis Cokes W 15 Jean Josselin, Vicente Saldivar W 15 Mitsunori Seki

Why Torres-Cotton won: A highly competitive fight between a quick, slick sharp-shooter and a relentless old battler, with the champion holding on to the belt thanks to a final round rally.

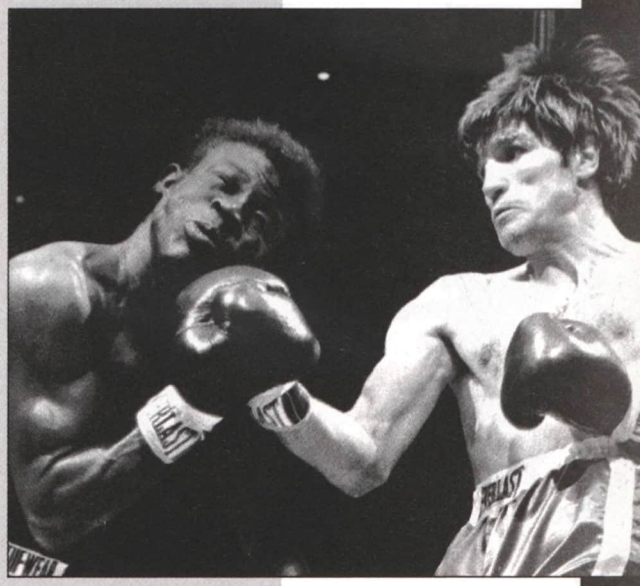
NINO BENVENUTI W 15 EMILE GRIFFITH
April 17, New York City | 1967

Setting the stage: Handsome Italian playboy Benvenuti was a former Olympic and world junior middleweight champion, with just one, split decision loss in 72 bouts. A savvy, 5'11" stylist with an educated jab and a habit of whining to referees, Benvenuti had reached his peak at the age of 29. Griffith, also 29, had squeaked past Dick Tiger to win the world middleweight title after three reigns as welterweight king. The Virgin Islander's defensive skills were superb, but he no longer punched with conviction, a result of having killed Benny Paret in the ring five years before.

What happened: The 153-pound Griffith was giving away five pounds and three inches in height, but he made up for these disadvantages in the opening round by firing quick combinations on the inside. One of Griffith's drawbacks, however, was that he sometimes lost concentration, and in the second round he found himself on the canvas as a result of such a lapse. Two rounds later, however, it was Benvenuti's turn to take a spill. From then on, the Italian edged most of the rounds by keeping Griffith at bay with his jab, and at the end of 15 fast-paced rounds, he secured a unanimous decision.

Other candidates: Vicente Saldivar KO 12 Howard Winstone, Dick Tiger W 15 Jose Torres, Emile Griffith W 15 Nino Benvenuti (rematch), Carlos Ortiz W 15 Ismael Laguna.

Why Benvenuti-Griffith won: A close, fast-paced contest between two highly skilled warriors with very different styles.



Benvenuti jolts Griffith with a right uppercut

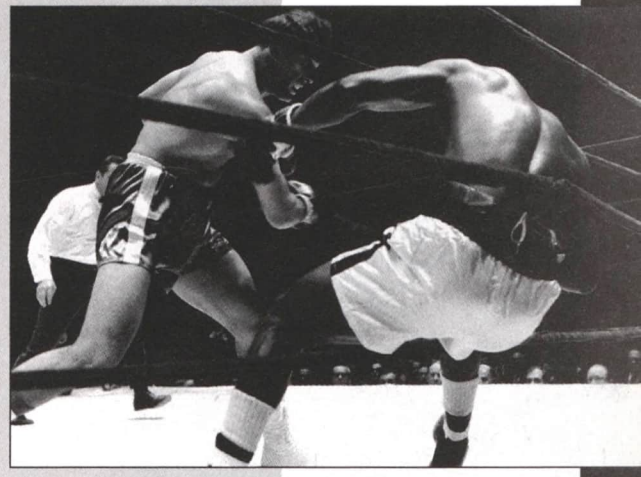
DICK TIGER W 10 FRANK DePAULA
October 25, New York City | 1968

Setting the stage: Tiger, 39, was in his first fight since losing his world light heavyweight title to Bob Foster. He was preoccupied with the Biafran-Nigerian civil war and may already have been affected the cancer that would kill him three years later. The big-hitting, wild-living DePaula, 10 years younger, seven pounds heavier, and five inches taller, had won his previous five on knockouts.

What happened: From the start, Tiger registered with solid combinations, and DePaula with wild flurries. In the second round, Tiger ran into a brutal left-right combo that lifted him off his feet, his head hitting the ring floor. A right then knocked him onto the lower strand of the ropes, but referee Arthur Mercante did not rule it a knockdown. In the third, Tiger dropped the younger man with a right hook. De Paula wobbled up, but was downed by another right and then battered on the ropes. Tiger touched down in the fourth, after which the pace slowed, with the older man's body attack and superior defense making the difference. De Paula wanted to retire at the end of the eighth, but his corner ignored his pleas. He survived but lost the unanimous decision by margins of six points (twice) and one point on Mercante's card.

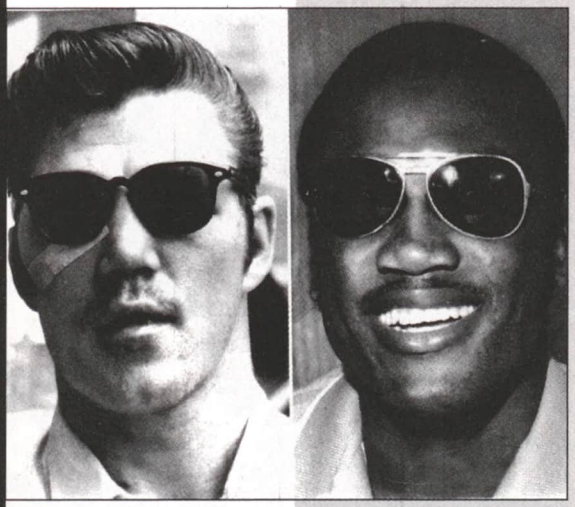
Other candidates: Lionel Rose W 15 Fighting Harada, Nino Benvenuti W 15 Emile Griffith, Carlos Cruz W 15 Carlos Ortiz, Lionel Rose W 15 Chucho Castillo

Why Tiger-DePaula won: A four knockdown slugfest, resulting in a big win for the faded but still potent Tiger.



DePaula has Tiger sagging on the ropes

1969 JOE FRAZIER KO 7 JERRY QUARRY
June 23, New York City



Quarry needs shades more than Frazier

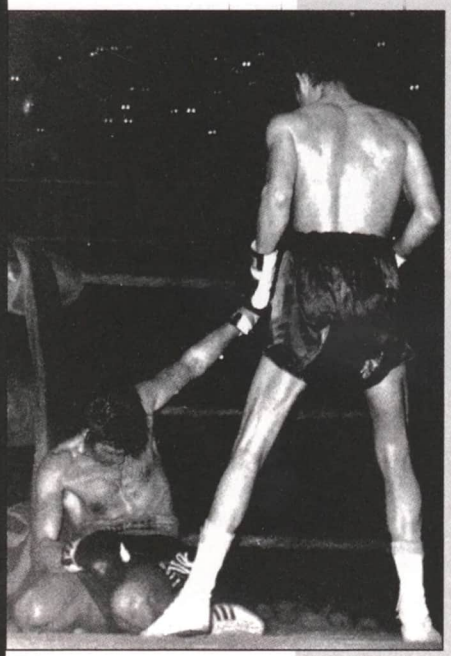
Setting the stage: Frazier, 25, was unbeaten since winning Olympic heavyweight gold and turning pro. Moreover, he held the New York State version of the heavyweight title. Quarry, a popular 24-year-old Irish American, had won five straight since dropping a disputed decision to Jimmy Ellis 14 months earlier. In his previous fight, he won a lopsided 12-round decision over the 235-pound Buster Mathis.

What happened: The 5'11", 203-pound "Smokin' Joe" launched his familiar, bobbing, weaving, threshing attack from the opening bell. Quarry, half an inch taller but five pounds lighter, met him head on, intent on testing the chin that only Oscar Bonavena had dented, three years earlier. They went toe-to-toe in the opening round, taking turns dishing out pain, and so it continued for two more rounds. By the fourth, however, it was clear that Quarry was fighting Frazier's fight, without the power or strength to compete on even terms. He was cut and staggered by Frazier's left hook, and from then on the beating became systematic. Finally, at the end of round seven, referee Arthur Mercante stepped it, officially because of the damage to Quarry's eyes.

Other candidates: Jose Napoles KO 13 Curtis Cokes, Ruben Olivares KO 5 Lionel Rose, Nino Benvenuti KO 11 Jose Rodriquez, Dick Tiger W 10 Nino Benvenuti, Leotis Martin KO 10 Sonny Liston

Why Frazier-Quarry won: Intense, crowd-pleasing slugfest between top-level heavyweights.

1970 CARLOS MONZON KO 12 NINO BENVENUTI
November 7, Rome, Italy



Monzon ends Benvenuti's middleweight reign

Setting the stage: The 28-year-old, 20-smokes-a-day Argentinean seemed nothing special, having been built up exclusively in South American rings. Three years earlier, he'd been more than lucky to get a hometown draw against Bennie Briscoe, his only name opponent. The 32-year-old Benvenuti was having his 88th professional fight and was making the fifth defense of his second middleweight title reign, but decisive non-title losses to Dick Tiger and Tom Bethea suggested he was past his prime.

What happened: The 6' Monzon stood erect and seemed to be pushing his punches, but they were far more powerful than they appeared. Boxing primarily from range behind his jab, he put the Italian under constant pressure, landing long blows with both hands, and whenever they clinched, he would whack the Italian's body, slowly draining his resistance. Benvenuti was cuter and quicker, which kept him in the fight until the halfway mark, but as the rounds progressed, Monzon began landing more frequently and the beating became one-sided. In round 12, Monzon landed a perfect right that felled Benvenuti face-first, and the title changed hands.

Other candidates: Ken Buchanan W 15 Ismael Laguna, Ruben Olivares W 15 Chucho Castillo, Chucho Castillo KO 14 Ruben Olivares, Vicente Saldivar W 15 Johnny Famachon

Why Monzon-Benvenuti won: The Argentinean was a prohibitive underdog, but proved to be a revelation, pounding out a decisive win on the champion's home patch in an intriguing, fast-paced fight.

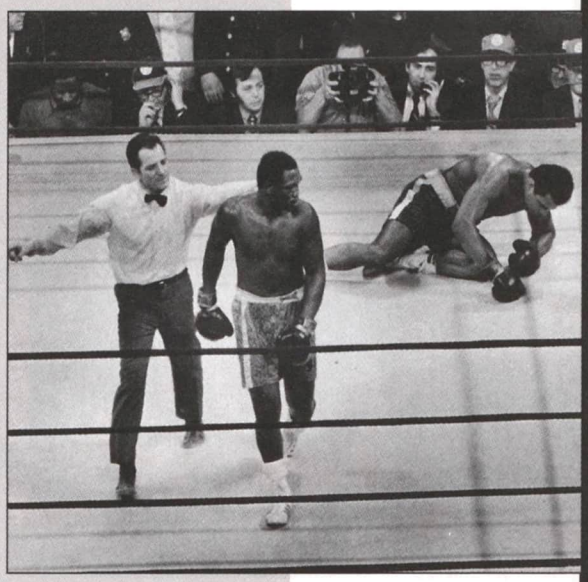
JOE FRAZIER W 15 MUHAMMAD ALI
March 8, New York City | 1971

Setting the stage: Despite beating Jimmy Ellis in a unification bout, Frazier needed to beat Ali to be considered more than a paper champion. After 3½ years of enforced inactivity, Ali returned to stop Jerry Quarry and Oscar Bonavena, and then set about taunting "Smokin' Joe, homing in on how he looked and spoke before settling on the "Uncle Tom" smear.

What happened: Ali, at 215 pounds, came in at his career-highest, which was nine more than Frazier. But this 29-year-old version of Ali could only fight in spurts—dance a bit, fire off flurries, and then retreat to the ropes. After conceding some of the early rounds, the 27-year-old Frazier managed to get under Ali's jab to whack away at his body and head, although his own jaw and eyes were swelled from the punches he absorbed. Frazier wobbled Ali in the 11th and put matters beyond doubt in the 15th when he landed a monstrous left hook that put Ali down. The decision was unanimous, with referee Arthur Mercante giving it to Frazier by two points, while the two judges had him up by three- and seven-point margins.

Other candidates: Ken Buchanan W 15 Ismael Laguna, Carlos Monzon KO 14 Emile Griffith, Ruben Olivares KO 11 Jesus Pimentel

Why Frazier-Ali won: It was indeed "The Fight Of The Century" (thus far) in terms of money and publicity generated, and it lived up to its billing—always exciting with the knockdown sealing the result.



Frazier seals victory with 15th-round knockdown of Ali

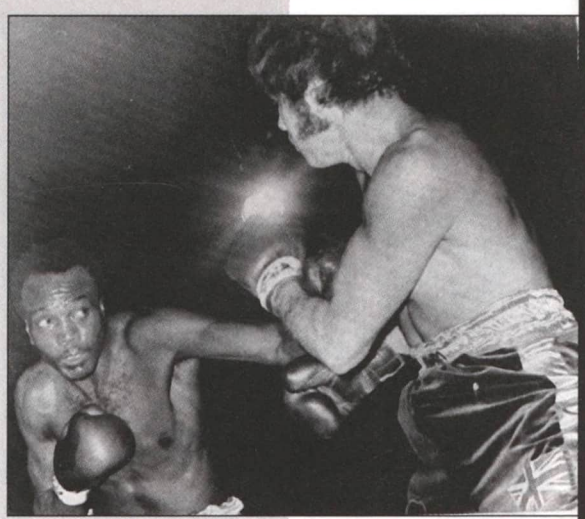
BOB FOSTER KO 14 CHRIS FINNEGAN
September 26, London, England | 1972

Setting the stage: After four years as champion and 10 defenses, the 34-year-old, 6'3" Foster had acquired invincible status at light heavyweight. Finnegan, 28, a skillful 6'1" southpaw who had won the middleweight gold medal in the 1968 Olympics, was unbeaten in his last 11 outings.

What happened: Despite his impressive record at the European level, Finnegan wasn't given much chance before the fight, but his speed, defensive prowess, and gritty determination made him a far tougher foe than any of Foster's previous light heavyweight victims. In the early rounds, he boxed off the back foot, moving quickly to avoid Foster's long, hard left jab and lethal hooks. There were spells when Finnegan was outboxing the older man, but Foster's edge in power and strength was huge, and as the fight progressed, he began to penetrate Finnegan's defense more frequently. Finnegan later said it was "like fighting with a shotgun pressed to your head." Foster was clearly in the lead when his left hook finished the fight 55 seconds into round 14.

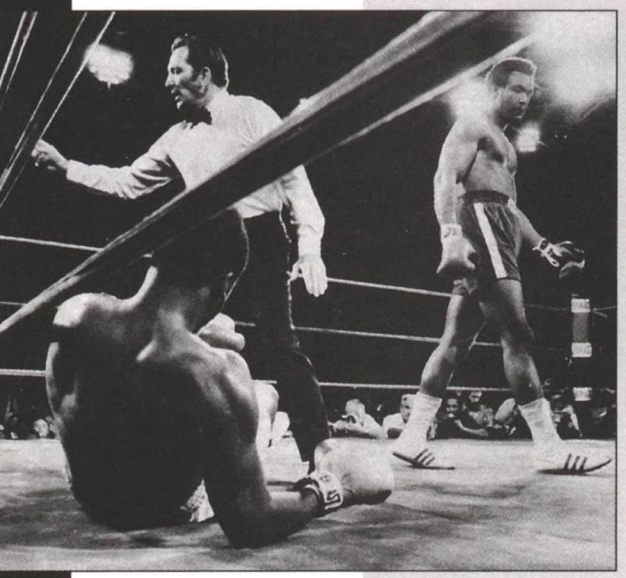
Other candidates: Carlos Monzon W 15 Bennie Briscoe, Tony Mundine KO 15 Bunny Sterling, Muhammad Ali KO 8 Bob Foster, Ben Villaflor D 15 Victor Echegaray, Roberto Duran KO 13 Ken Buchanan

Why Foster-Finnegan won: Finnegan's relative youth and southpaw skills made for a harder-than-expected challenge to a champion slightly past his best. It was a fast-paced, gripping bout, nm ending with a deci-



Finnegan gives Foster a tougher time than expected

1973 GEORGE FOREMAN KO 2 JOE FRAZIER
January 22, Kingston, Jamaica



Foreman destroys Frazier in Jamaica

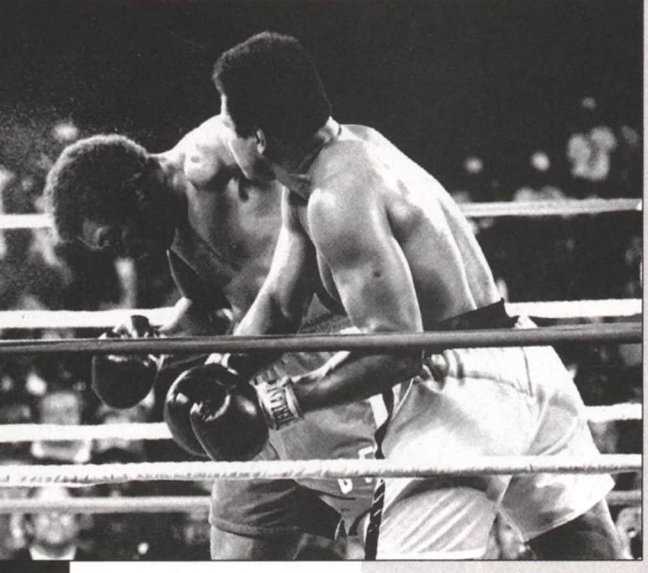
Setting the stage: Frazier basically put the title on ice in the two years after outpointing Ali—avoiding a return and instead defending against Terry Daniels and Ron Stander, two of the most inept challengers in heavyweight history. During this time, Foreman picked up 11 knockouts, but he was a 3-1 underdog because he had never beaten a major contender.

What happened: The 6'3", 217-pound, 24-year-old Foreman dwarfed the 29-year-old champion, who looked soft and pudgy at 214 pounds. The crowd of 36,000 watched in astonishment as Foreman stood up to Frazier and then smashed him to the canvass with a huge right. Frazier bounced up, but was soon down again, courtesy of several more rights. Again he rose, clearly dazed, and was dropped for a third time shortly before the bell. "Smokin' Joe" charged out for round two, but Foreman chopped him down with a left-right to the jaw. He was soon down again, this time from a pair of left hooks. At 2:25 of the second round, after the sixth knockdown, with Frazier's eyes glazed and his body reeling, referee Arthur Mercante stopped the fight.

Other candidates: Ken Norton W 12 Muhammad Ali, Muhammad Ali W 12 Ken Norton, Arnold Taylor KO 14 Romeo Anaya, Eder Jofre W 15 Jose Legra, Carlos Monzon W 15 Emile Griffith, Antonio Cervantes KO 5 Alfonso Frazer

Why Foreman-Frazier won: A dramatic upset, six knockdowns in two rounds, and the arrival of a bona fide monster.

1974 MUHAMMAD ALI KO 8 GEORGE FOREMAN
October 30, Kinshasa, Zaire



Ali rocks Foreman's world with a right

Setting the stage: Foreman, 25, was in his prime, and his size, power, his devastating victories over Frazier and Norton, and his sullen demeanor, gave him an aura of invincibility. Ali, nearing 33, was well past his best and had struggled with Norton and Frazier. But he acclimatized in the African heat during the 35-day delay, prompted by a cut Foreman sustained in training. Conversely, Big George used an air-conditioned hotel to prepare for "The Rumble In The Jungle."

What happened: The 216-pound Ali danced at first, but the heat, soft ring floor, and the 220-pound Foreman's ability to cut off the ring persuaded him to preserve his strength by fighting off the ropes. Foreman, a 3-1 favorite, fired enormous punches at his taunting adversary, but Ali was able to make him miss while countering off the ropes. As Foreman began to tire, he was pushing his punches, while Ali's were sharp. Late in the eighth, Ali moved quickly off the ropes and fired four punches, the last of them a whistling right to the jaw. The fatigued Foreman was counted out at the 2:58 mark, although he was actually up at nine.

Other candidates: Muhammad Ali W 12 Joe Frazier, Ernesto Marcel W 15 Alexis Arguello, Roberto Duran KO 11 Esteban DeJesus, Alexis Arguello KO 13 Ruben Olivares

Why Ali-Foreman won: Ali's improvised "rope-a-dope" tactics secured him a knockout victory against prohibitive odds. Never before had one truly great heavyweight champion been beaten at the peak of his powers by another.

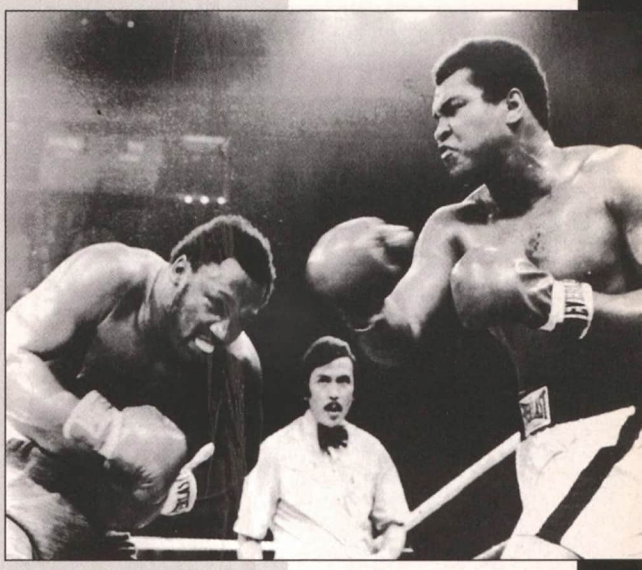
MUHAMMAD ALI KO 15 JOE FRAZIER
October 1, Quezon City, Philippines
1975

Setting the stage: Ali assumed he could handle this rubber match with ease and spent his time carousing with his new mistress, arriving under-prepared and overweight. He labeled Frazier "The Gorilla" and called him "nothing but a punching bag." But he did not count on the intensity of Frazier's hatred.

What happened: Ali controlled the early rounds and hurt Frazier, but in the fifth round, things began to change. The unfit champion was tiring in the stifling heat and humidity, and for five brutal rounds he was battered on the ropes. The fight swung decisively in round 12 when Ali wobbled Frazier with a right. Frazier's eyes and cheeks began to swell alarmingly and it grew worse in round 13 when Ali knocked Frazier's mouthpiece out. By the 14th round, he had battered the stumbling, one-eyed former champion to a point when only pride was keeping him up. Despite Frazier's pleadings, head trainer Eddie Futch refused to allow him out for the final round. When Ali realized he'd won, he collapsed, saying it was the closest thing to death he'd known.

Other candidates: Roberto Duran KO 10 Ray Lampkin, John Stracey KO 6 Jose Napoles, Antonio Cervantes W 15 Esteban DeJesus, David Kotey W 15 Ruben Olivares

Why Ali-Frazier won: The "Thrilla In Manila" is one of the greatest fights of all-time thanks to the intensity of the action, the to-and-fro pattern of dominance, and the incredible will to win shown by both men.



Ali catches Frazier charging in

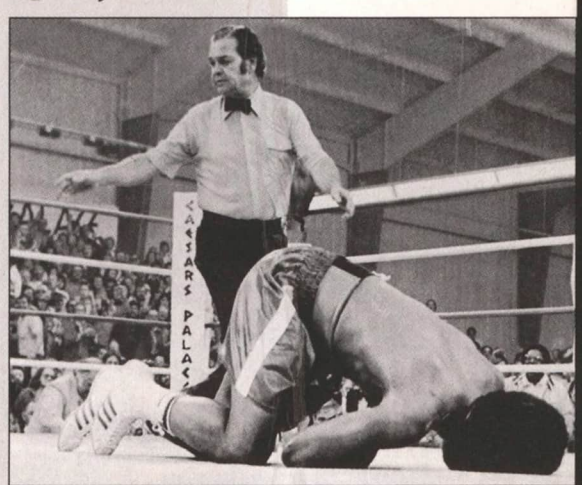
GEORGE FOREMAN KO 5 RON LYLE
January 24, Las Vegas, Nevada
1976

Setting the stage: Foreman, 27, had been idle for the 15 months since his Ali disaster. Lyle, 34, had come back from his 11th-round loss to Ali by knocking out Earnie Shavers. This big-hitting 6'3", 220-pound ex-con also had wins over Jimmy Ellis and Oscar Bonavena.

What happened: After an exchange of jabs, Lyle stunned Foreman with a right and then struck hard again. In the second, Foreman landed heavy jabs before hurting Lyle with a right. In the third, Big George came back with some draining bodyshots, but was shaken late in the round. Then it exploded. Lyle dropped Foreman with a left and a right in the fourth. Foreman rose quickly, held briefly, and then dropped Lyle with a right. Foreman piled in, but was dropped on his face by a huge left hook. He rose unsteadily and was saved by the bell. Early in the fifth, Lyle hurt him again, and then, after another exchange, staggered him with an uppercut. But Foreman fought back furiously, cornering Lyle and belting him. Finally, Lyle, who was ahead on two of the three cards, collapsed and was counted out at the 2:28 mark.

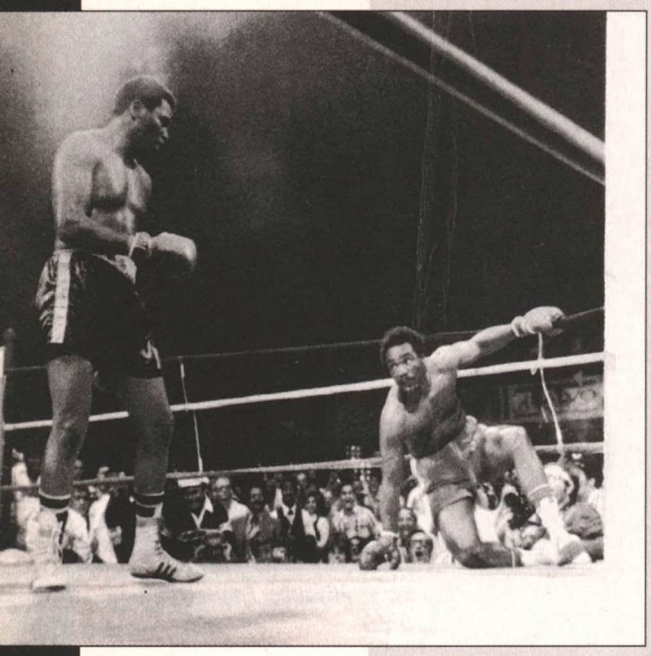
Other candidates: Victor Galindez KO 15 Richie Kates, Carlos Monzon W 15 Rodrigo Valdez, Wilfred Benitez W 15 Antonio Cervantes

Why Foreman-Lyle won: The fourth round was one of the most exciting in boxing history, the fifth produced a thrilling end, and the first three were pretty hot too.



Lyle puts Foreman on his face

1977 JIMMY YOUNG W 12 GEORGE FOREMAN
March 17, San Juan, Puerto Rico



Young floors Foreman en route to upset win

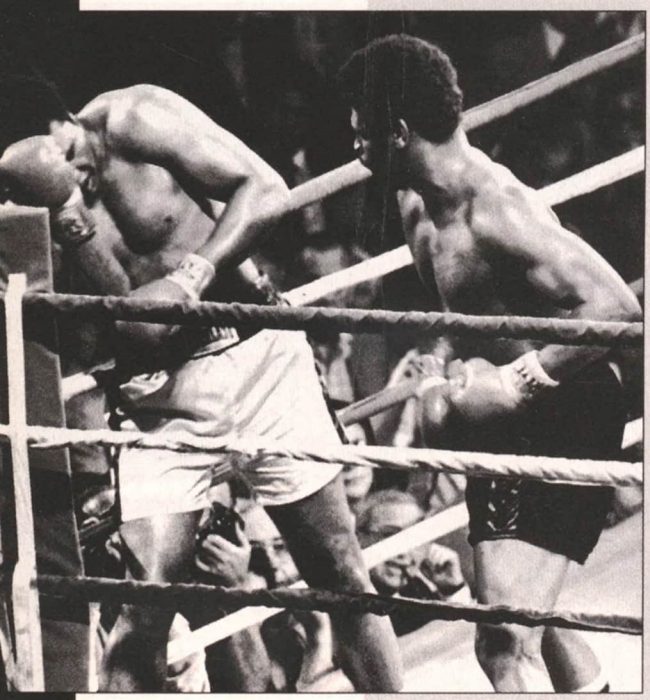
Setting the stage: Young should have been champion, having outboxed an out-of-shape Ali 11 months earlier. Overawed by Ali's aura and turned off by Young's negativity, the judges went the other way. Nobody gave Young a chance against Foreman despite the Philadelphian's pair of victories over Ron Lyle. Big George arrived the day before the fight without acclimatizing, coming at 229 pounds, five more than in his 1976 return with Joe Frazier and 16 more than Young. "I'm going to break his neck," Foreman predicated.

What happened: The quick-moving Young made Foreman miss while slip-sliding away and sneaking in sharp jabs and counters. Foreman paced himself, doing little in the first half. In round seven, he finally caught his elusive tormentor, but Young survived and the ex-champ was exhausted by his effort. Foreman had nothing left by round 12, when the feather-fisted Young dropped him with a crisp right. The decision was unanimous by margins of one, four, and seven points. Foreman collapsed in his dressing room and later claimed to have had a religious epiphany there, and did not fight again for the next 10 years.

Other candidates: Carlos Zarate KO 4 Alfonso Zamora, Carlos Monzon W 15 Rodrigo Valdez, Muhammad Ali W 15 Earnie Shavers, Rodrigo Valdez W 15 Bennie Briscoe, Carlos Palomino W 15 Armando Muniz

Why Young-Foreman won: The shock of the upset, combined with Young's survival of the torrid seventh round and his surprise 12th-round knockdown.

1978 LEON SPINKS W 15 MUHAMMAD ALI
February 15, Las Vegas, Nevada



Spinks drives Ali into the ropes

Setting the stage: Ali picked Olympic light heavyweight gold medalist Spinks as the softest possible alternative to Ken Norton. Ali barely bothered to train, while the normally lackadaisical "Neon Leon" was taken to the Catskill Mountains for a punishing two months of conditioning. He escaped once by climbing out of his bedroom window, and tore a rib muscle in sparring (a painkilling injection numbed the rib, until round 11).

What happened: Spinks steamed forward, a style memorably dubbed by Hunter S. Thompson as "the roving tripod." The soft 224-pound Ali offered little in return, spending most of his time on the ropes. Angelo Dundee implored Ali to do more, but it was only in the last third that he stepped it up. Going into the 15th, Ali knew he needed a knockout and managed to drive Spinks into the ropes, but it was Leon who had the last word. The decision was ludicrously split, with one judge favoring Ali by a single point, and the others going for Spinks by five and three points.

Other candidates: Larry Holmes W 15 Ken Norton, Alexis Arguello KO 13 Alfredo Escalara, Wilfredo Gomez KO 5 Carlos Zarate, Roberto Duran KO 12 Esteban DeJesus

Why Spinks-Ali won: The significance of the event, the scale of the upset, and the gutsy, non-stop punching of the underdog. But, really, Holmes-Norton was a far better fight.

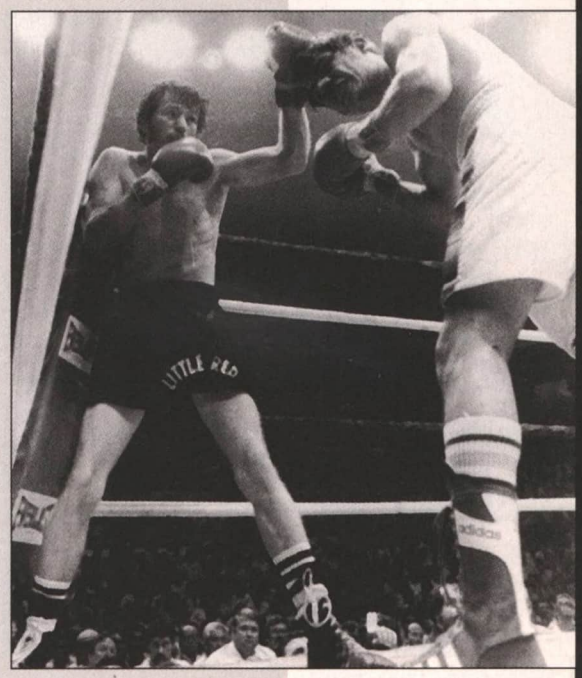
DANNY LOPEZ KO 15 MIKE AYALA
June 17, San Antonio, Texas | 1979

Setting the stage: The Los Angeles-based Lopez, 26, was making his seventh defense of the WBC featherweight title. A lean, 5'7" brawler who hit extremely hard, he had reached his peak, and was unbeaten in his last 16 fights. Hometown hero Ayala, 22, was a 5'4" super bantam who liked to brawl, but was also a sharp counter-puncher.

What happened: Ayala wasn't conceding ground on home turf and they exchanged brutal punishment. "Little Red" was the heavier hitter, but Ayala's superior skill meant he was landing frequently. Ayala took a knee in the seventh, but in the ninth he wobbled the titleholder. In round 11, with Ayala trying to counter off the ropes, Lopez landed a perfectly timed right that put the smaller man down again. Referee Carlos Padilla flubbed the count, but after two minutes' confusion he allowed the fight to continue. At the end of 14 rounds, one judge had Ayala ahead, with two preferring Lopez, who threw everything into the final round, until Padilla stepped in at the 1:09 mark. Ayala later admitted to being high on drugs during the fight.

Other candidates: Sugar Ray Leonard KO 15 Wilfred Benitez, Larry Holmes KO 12 Mike Weaver, Matthew Saad Muhammad KO 8 Marvin Johnson, Marvin Hagler D 15 Vito Antuofermo, Eddie Logan KO 7 Alfonso Zamora

Why Lopez-Ayala won: A double knockdown slugfest, with Lopez' advantages in size and power almost balanced by Ayala's counter-punching skills.



Cornered Lopez holds of Ayala

MATTHEW SAAD MUHAMMAD KO 14 YAQUI LOPEZ
July 13, McAfee, New Jersey | 1980

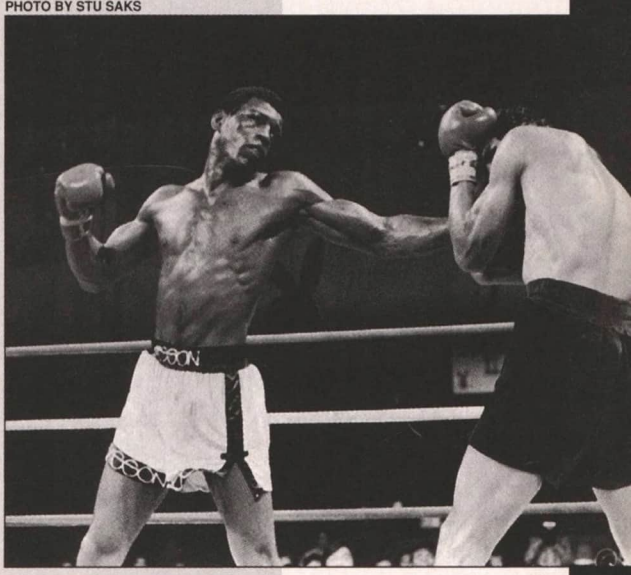
Setting the stage: Lopez, 29, was considered washed-up after 60 fights, having failed in three previous light heavyweight title bids (against Victor Galindez twice and John Conteh). Two years earlier he'd also lost to Saad Muhammad, who was now making the fourth defense of the WBC belt. But Lopez trained as never before, knowing what he faced in the relentless, big-hitting, come-from-behind, 26-year-old Philadelphian.

What happened: They went at each other with frightening intensity. Saad was cut above his right eye and Lopez on his nose. By the start of the eighth, Lopez was slightly ahead, but he decided to leave nothing to chance, bashing Saad around the ring. "I won the battle," he said of that round, "but lost the war." Almost exhausted, Lopez slowed up, and in the 10th, Saad began to take over. In round 14, he wobbled Lopez with an overhand right and dropped him with an uppercut. Lopez clambered up, but was soon down again from another right. He fought back until another right put him down. Finally, after he was down for the fourth time, referee Waldermar Schmidt stopped it at the 2:03 mark.

Other candidates: Salvador Sanchez W 15 Ruben Castillo, Roberto Duran W 15 Sugar Ray Leonard, Mike Weaver KO 13 Gerrie Coetzee

Why Muhammad-Lopez won: As THE RING put it: "None of the [other] fights were as brutal, as savage, as explosive, as moving, or as heart-stopping as the incomparable light heavyweight classic."

PHOTO BY STU SAKS



Saad Muhammad slams Lopez with a left

1981 RAY LEONARD KO 14 THOMAS HEARNS
September 16, Las Vegas, Nevada

Leonard whips a left to Hearns' head

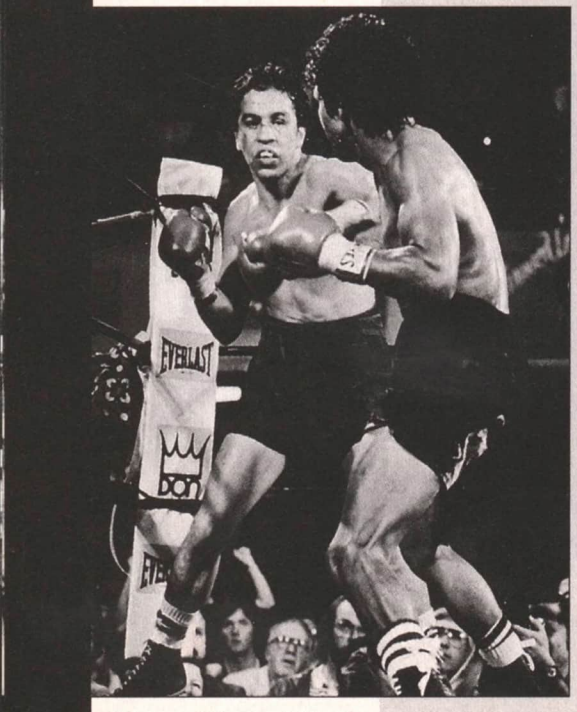
Setting the stage: They were already giants in the boxing world. Leonard, 25, had achieved more, having vanquished Wilfred Benitez, avenged his sole defeat by driving Roberto Duran to the "No Mas" surrender, and secured crossover celebrity status. But the 22-year-old Hearns, who 13 months earlier demolished Pipino Cuevas for the WBA welter belt, enjoyed the more fearsome reputation, with 30 knockouts in 32 straight wins. Cast in the role of the villain, the "Hit Man" was a 6-5 favorite.

What happened: The stalking 6'1" Hearns used his 78-inch reach to pick off his fleet-footed, 5'10" rival, but the roles changed when Hearns wobbled precariously under Leonard's sixth-round assault. Sugar Ray maintained the pressure, whacking away at his foe's elongated body. Hearns then reverted to the jab-and-move style of his amateur days, closing Leonard's eye as he extended his lead. After 12 rounds, Angelo Dundee famously said to Leonard, "You're blowing it, son." Leonard rallied back to shake Hearns with a right, before driving him through the ropes and putting him down. In the 14th, Sugar Ray pinned his rival on the ropes and punched away until referee Dave Pearl stepped in at the 1:45 mark.

Other Candidates: Cornelius Boza-Edwards KO 14 Bobby Chacon, Salvador Sanchez KO 8 Wilfredo Gomez, Larry Holmes KO 11 Renaldo Snipes, Alexis Arguello KO 14 Ray Mancini

Why Leonard-Hearns won: Two legends at their peaks with all the twists and turns you could hope for, ending in a come-from-behind stoppage.

1982 BOBBY CHACON W 15 BAZOOKA LIMON
December 11, Sacramento, California



Chacon and Limon mix it up in thriller

Setting the stage: Chacon, 31, who lived with his heart on his sleeve, was wild in the ring and even wilder outside it. The crowds adored him for his shortcomings as much as his triumphs. These wild ways cost him several fights and earned him thousands of fans. His long rivalry with WBC junior lightweight titleholder Rafael "Bazooka" Limon, a fiery Mexican southpaw with a good punch, were among his most exciting fights. In three previous meetings, they had one win each and a technical draw. Chacon dedicated the fight to his wife, Valorie, who had recently committed suicide after he refused to retire.

What happened: "Schoolboy" fought with even more fervor than usual, but the early rounds belonged to Bazooka, who worked the body before dropping the Californian in the fourth. Then it turned, with Chacon targeting the body and slowing down his rival. Limon, however, had a few tricks left, and in round 10 he put Chacon down again. Once again the American rallied, but going into the 15th, Limon was still ahead on two cards and even on the third. With 10 seconds to go, Chacon got through with a searing right and Limon went down. This made the difference, giving Chacon the title by margins of 142-141, 141-140, and 143-141.

Other candidates: Aaron Pryor KO 14 Alexis Arguello, Larry Holmes KO 13 Gerry Cooney, Salvador Sanchez KO 15 Azumah Nelson, Wilfredo Gomez KO 14 Lupe Pintor

Why Chacon-Limon won: Pryor-Arguello ran it close, but that final-seconds, come-from-behind knockdown swung it.

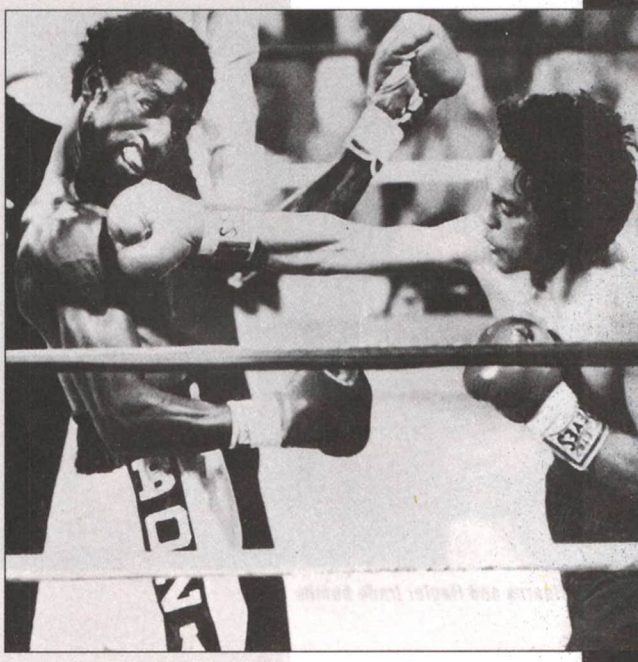
BOBBY CHACON W 12 CORNELIUS BOZA-EDWARDS
May 15, Las Vegas, Nevada
1983

Setting the stage: The Britain-based Ugandan stopped Chacon in his first defense of the WBC title he'd seized from Bazooka Limon in 1981, but lost it in his second defense. Boza-Edwards won seven straight after that setback and, nearing 27, felt he'd reached his peak, and was a slight favorite to repeat his triumph over Chacon, who was making his first defense.

What happened: The American crowd-pleaser took a count in the first round and was soon dripping blood from a severe cut. His condition looked so bad that TV commentator Dr. Ferdie Pacheco said the fight should be stopped. But once again, Chacon's heroic spirit was on display and he came on strong, absorbing an endless stream of hard punches while using a ferocious body attack to force his way back. He hurt Boza-Edwards with a tattoo of hooks and he dominated most of the later rounds. Chacon's left hook put it beyond doubt in the final round, when he floored his foe. Scores were 115-113, 115-112, and 117-111.

Other candidates: Michael Spinks W 15 Dwight Muhammad Qawi, Roberto Duran KO 8 Davey Moore, Marvin Hagler W 15 Roberto Duran, Edwin Rosario W 12 Jose Luis Ramirez

Why Chacon-Boza-Edwards won: Once again, Chacon came back from the brink (plus a horrendous cut), and once again he sealed it with a final-round knockdown.



Chacon rallies back against Boza-Edwards

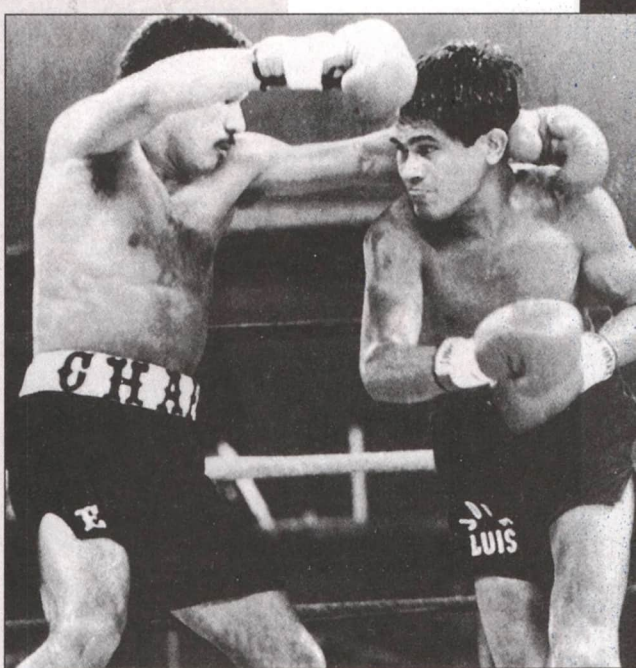
JOSE LUIS RAMIREZ KO 4 EDWIN ROSARIO
November 3, San Juan, Puerto Rico
1984

Setting the stage: Rosario's skill, chin, and paralyzing power drew rave reviews before he won a unanimous decision over Ramirez to lift the vacant WBC lightweight title shortly after his 20th birthday. Nearly a year later, the 5'6" Puerto Rican powerhouse returned from a hand injury to flatten Roberto Elizondo in one round before edging past Howard Davis Jr. (dropping him with 10 seconds to go to secure a split decision). Only 21, Rosario was making what seemed like a routine hometown defense against his Mexican rival, a 25-year-old southpaw.

What happened: It went according to the script at first, with "Chapo" fighting in fine style for the home fans, outboxing, outpunching, and dropping Ramirez in the first round and again in the second. But the superbly conditioned Mexican, who had picked up five wins since losing the title, kept coming, and late in round four he trapped the younger man in a corner, where he landed 17 unanswered bombs. The deadly salvo prompted referee Steve Crosson to wave it off, eight seconds from the end of the round.

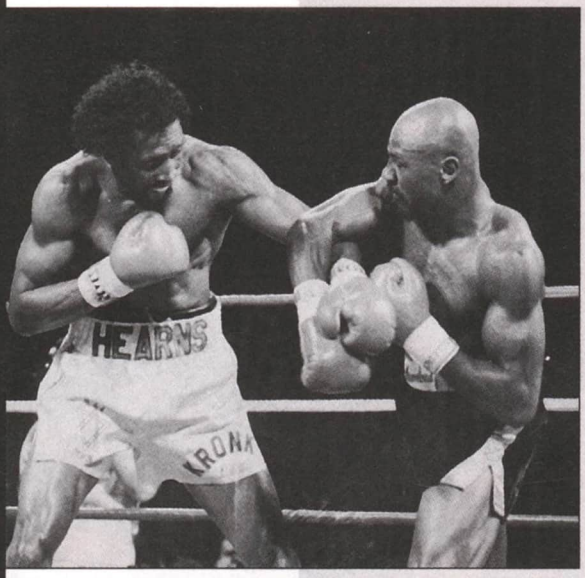
Other candidates: Livingstone Bramble KO 14 Ray Mancini, Thomas Hearns KO 2 Roberto Duran, Azumah Nelson KO 11 Wilfredo Gomez, Marvin Hagler KO 10 Juan Roldan

Why Ramirez-Rosario won: The Puerto Rican hero came in as the overwhelming favorite and showed his stuff in the first 3½ rounds, but then, suddenly, the Mexican battered him to defeat.



Ramirez comes off the floor to stop Rosario

1985 MARVIN HAGLER KO 3 THOMAS HEARNS
April 15, Las Vegas, Nevada



Hearns and Hagler trade bombs

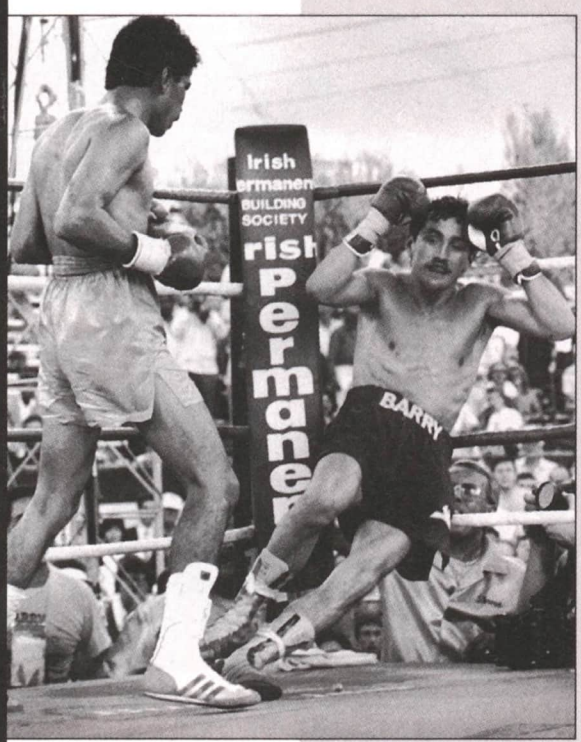
Setting the stage: The "Hit Man" had done everything right since his 1981 setback against Ray Leonard—eight decisive wins, including a two-round blowout of Roberto Duran, whom Hagler had labored to outpoint. Hearns' trainer, Emanuel Steward, wanted him to outbox Hagler, but after an unscheduled prefight leg massage, Hearns' pins were weak, and he opted to go nuclear. "My whole plan was to take the fight to him," Hearns said. "I was going to knock him out in three. There was no doubt in my mind."

What happened: Hearns blasted Hagler with a huge right, buckling the champion's knees and breaking his own hand. The switch-hitting southpaw champion held and then started firing back. For three minutes they pounded each other with unrelenting fury. Coming out for the second, with a bad hand and weak legs, Hearns absorbed frightening punishment from the marauding Hagler, and yet he was still firing back. Early in round three, referee Richard Steele called timeout to get the deep cut on Hagler's forehead examined, but allowed the fight to continue. Marvelous Marvin pounced, a right hook behind the ear and right cross to the cheek dropping Hearns. Hearns hauled himself up on spaghetti legs and fell into Steele's arms. It was all over 2:01 into the round.

Other candidates: Barry McGuigan W 15 Eusebio Pedroza, Larry Holmes W 15 Carl Williams, Donald Curry KO 2 Milton McCrory

Why Hagler-Hearns won: No competition, really—three of the most thrilling rounds in boxing history.

1986 STEVE CRUZ W 15 BARRY McGUIGAN
June 23, Las Vegas, Nevada



McGuigan crumbles under Cruz' onslaught

Setting the staged: Cruz was seen as a passable late substitute, suitable for introducing "The Clones Cyclone" to a larger American audience. The Texan had a decent record, but had never beaten anyone special. McGuigan expected his vicious left hook to secure him an easy third defense of the WBA featherweight crown, but he had not prepared himself for the brutal mid-summer heat of Nevada.

What happened: The upright Cruz, 22, threw quick, straight punches, while McGuigan charged, throwing close-range hooks. McGuigan's power gave him an early edge, but the heat sapped his strength as Cruz' looping rights found the mark. After the fifth, McGuigan's punches slowed, while Cruz opened a cut over the Irishman's left eye. But in round nine, McGuigan dug deep and shook the Texan. Cruz rallied to drop McGuigan with a left hook in the 10th, and in the 12th, McGuigan was docked a point for a low blow. The titleholder roared back in the 13th and 14th rounds, after which he had nothing left. Cruz dropped him twice in the final round, and even though McGuigan held on till the final bell, he lost by scores of 142-141, 143-142, and 143-139.

Other candidates: Evander Holyfield W 15 Dwight Muhammad Qawi, Marvin Hagler KO 11 John Mugabi, Lloyd Honeyghan KO 6 Donald Curry

Why Cruz-McGuigan won: Non-stop action between boxer and fighter, ending with two late knockdowns and a major upset.

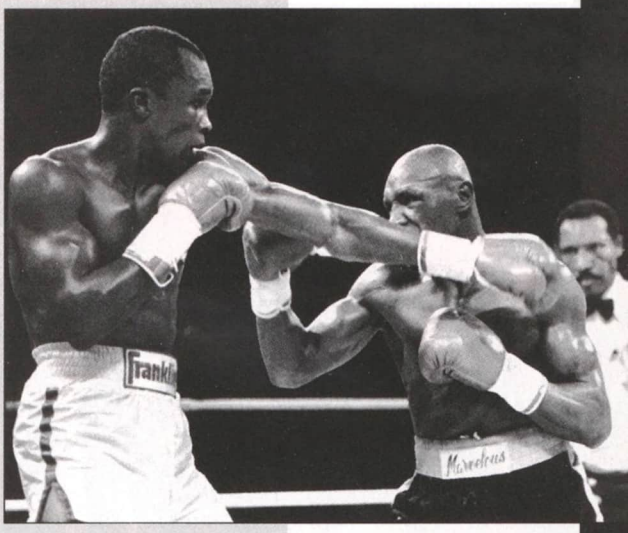
RAY LEONARD W 12 MARVIN HAGLER
April 6, Las Vegas, Nevada
1987

Setting the stage: Hagler had been out for 13 months and was nearing 33. After 66 fights, he was past his peak. Leonard, who retired in 1982 with a detached retina, had fought just once in five years and never at middleweight. Leonard insisted on 12 rounds and trained for six months, simulating fight conditions.

What happened: Leonard boxed off the back foot, using flashy, light-fisted combinations and always ending the rounds with attention-grabbing flurries. He taunted, threw an exaggerated bolo, and danced, while Hagler stalked, switching from southpaw to orthodox, but struggled to catch his fleet-footed tormentor. In round nine, Marvelous Marvin landed several heavy blows to hurt Sugar Ray, but Leonard flurried back. Leonard ran in the late rounds and all the meaningful action came from Hagler. The decision was split. Lou Filippo went 115-113 for Hagler, Dave Moretti for Leonard by the same margin, both defensible, but Jose's Guerra's 118-110 for Leonard was silly. "I had fun tonight," said Leonard. Hagler responded: "Leonard fought like a girl. His punches meant nothing. I fought my heart out. I can't believe they took it away from me."

Other candidates: Thomas Hearns KO 4 Juan Roldan, Mike McCallum KO 5 Donald Curry, Michael Spinks KO 5 Gerry Cooney

Why Leonard-Hagler won: A major upset carried out in brazen style, with Leonard's flashy boxing serving either as a revelation or a smoke-and-mirrors show, depending on your perspective.



Leonard fends off Hagler's attack

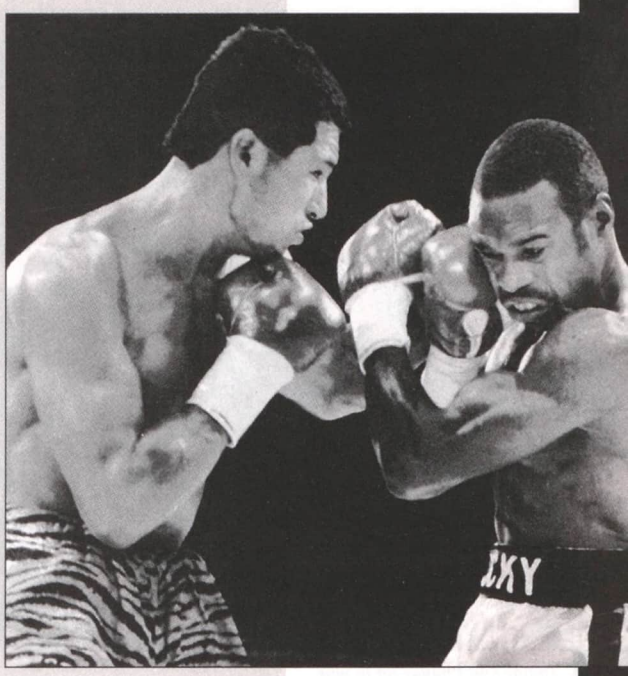
TONY LOPEZ W 12 ROCKY LOCKRIDGE
July 23, Sacramento, California
1988

Setting the stage: After twice coming close at featherweight, Lockridge stopped Roger Mayweather in one to lift the WBA junior lightweight title. After two defenses, though, he lost it via unjust majority decision to Wilfredo Gomez. Lopez then challenged Julio Cesar Chavez for the WBC title and again came out on the wrong end of a majority verdict. Next he stopped Barry Michael for the IBF belt and was making his third defense against local favorite Lopez.

What happened: Lopez, 25, had youth, strength, and a partisan home crowd on his side, but lacked experience. The 5'5" Lockridge, 29, was giving away two inches and two pounds, but had been in with superior opposition. What followed was a classic battle with work rate and power pitted against defensive skill and a sharp right hand. Lopez missed often, but kept throwing, working the body, while Lockridge fired back with quick bursts, often at close quarters. In round eight, he landed a well-timed right and Lopez went down heavily, but was up inside the count. "Tony The Tiger's" relentless tenacity gave him the edge down the stretch, earning a unanimous decision, 115-112, 115-112, and 116-112.

Other candidates: Iran Barkley KO 3 Thomas Hearns, Ray Leonard KO 9 Donny Lalonde, Simon Brown KO 14 Tyrone Trice, Meldrick Taylor KO 12 Buddy McGirt

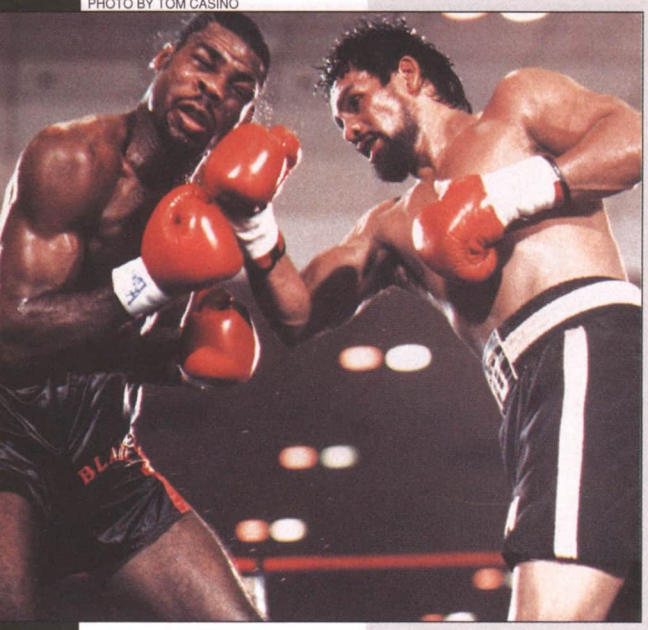
Why Lopez-Lockridge won: A wonderful blend of styles, with Lopez coming through the knockdown test to clinch a close one with his busier work rate.



Lopez delivers a left to Lockridge's noggin

1989 ROBERTO DURAN W 12 IRAN BARKLEY
February 24, Atlantic City, New Jersey

PHOTO BY TOM CASINO



Duran blasts Barkley with a right

Setting the stage: Duran's late-career surge seemed to end decisively when Thomas Hearns blasted him out in two rounds. Too many years, too many parties, too many fights? "El Cholo" took nearly two years off and then won eight of his next nine at middleweight (the only blemish, a close points loss against Robbie Sims), earning a shot at new WBC titleholder Barkley, who was fresh from blasting Hearns to a shocking second-round defeat. The 5'7" Duran, who was nearing 38, gave away four pounds and six inches to the 29-year-old Barkley.

What happened: Duran used all the wiles gained from 91 fights to outbox Barkley from middle range, timing his punches to perfection, while slipping and ducking most of the heavy, incoming flak. He shook the younger man in round one, went toe-to-toe in the middle rounds, absorbed some huge punches along the way, and then dropped Barkley hard with a beautiful combination in round 11 to take a deserved split decision.

Other candidates: Thomas Hearns D 12 Ray Leonard, Mike Tyson KO 5 Frank Bruno, Julio Cesar Chavez KO 10 Roger Mayweather

Why Duran-Barkley won: A vintage performance from an inspired Duran. At times, the far bigger Barkley heavily outgunned him, but Duran's tenacity and skill saw him through, with the knockdown proving decisive.

1990 JULIO CESAR CHAVEZ KO 12 MELDRICK TAYLOR
March 17, Las Vegas, Nevada

Taylor and Chavez go to war

Setting the stage: This was a hugely anticipated unification bout for bragging rights between Mexico's most renowned sporting hero and an American Olympic gold medalist. Both were undefeated. Chavez, 27, had won the WBC junior welterweight title 10 months earlier after reigning at lightweight and super feather. Taylor, 23, had stopped Buddy McGirt for the IBF 140-pound title in 1988.

What happened: Taylor had a huge edge in speed, and Chavez seemed to have no answer to his dazzling combinations. The American made him miss and then fired back with flurries, and he was also pushing Chavez around. But when the Mexican landed, his punches thudded home with far more force than Taylor's. After 11 rounds, Taylor's face was swollen, his mouth bleeding, and he looked tired. Chavez' corner told him he needed a knockout. In the final 15 seconds, Chavez jumped on the exhausted Taylor, decking him with a brutal right. Taylor hauled himself up and with two seconds to go, and no time for Chavez to land again, referee Richard Steele stopped it. Taylor was ahead by 108-101 and 107-102 on two cards, while the third was a ridiculous 105-104 for Chavez.

Other candidates: Buster Douglas KO 10 Mike Tyson, Julian Jackson KO 4 Herol Graham, Aaron Davis KO 9 Mark Breland

Why Chavez-Taylor won: One of the most controversial endings in boxing history brought a dubious conclusion to a highly entertaining fight in which Taylor's superior speed and skill edged out Chavez' advantages in power and resilience.

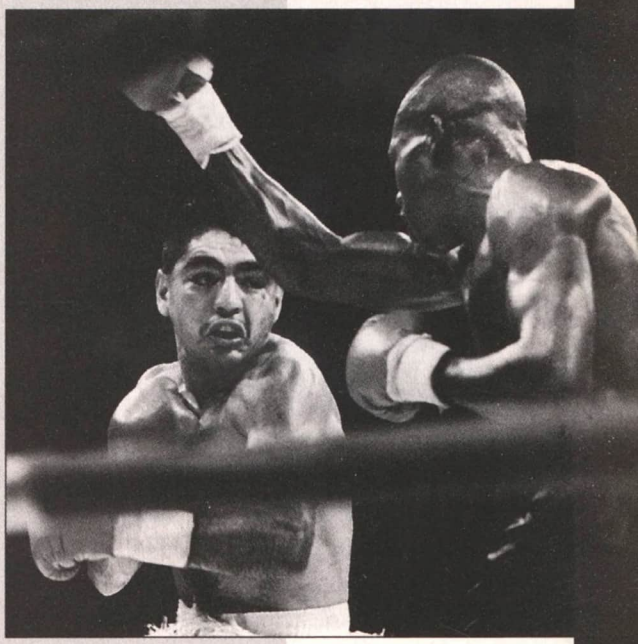
ROBERT QUIROGA W 12 AKEEM ANIFOWOSHE
June 15, San Antonio, Texas
1991

Setting the stage: Local hero Quiroga, 25, won the IBF super flyweight title 14 months earlier and he was making his third defense. "Kid" Akeem, a 22-year-old Las Vegas-based Nigerian, said he would retire if he didn't win.

What happened: The 5'3" Quiroga edged the opening rounds with a persistent body and head assault, but in the third, the 5'9" Akeem started landing with hard crosses and hooks. Bleeding from the left eye, the champion charged back, drawing blood from the Nigerian's mouth. In the sixth, the Akeem began to weaken the Texan with his long, hard punches, but Quiroga never stopped throwing. In round 12, he went all-out, punching non-stop, but the challenger refused to back off. Akeem's lip was cut and his left eye swollen, while Quiroga's face was a mess. Surprisingly, the champion was given a unanimous verdict, 116-112 (twice) and 115-114. Akeem collapsed when he heard the result. He was rushed to the hospital, operated on immediately for a brain injury. Although he regained consciousness 14 hours later, he was mostly confined to a wheelchair for the last three years of his life.

Other candidates: Simon Brown KO 10 Maurice Blocker, Chris Eubank KO 12 Michael Watson, Muangchai Kittikasem KO 13 Jung Koo Chang

Why Quiroga-Akeem won: As Akeem's manager, Billy Baxter, put it: "You'll see a fight like this every 10 years. Neither fighter clinched. Every round was three minutes of bombardment."



Quiroga and Akeem stand and trade

RIDDICK BOWE W 12 EVANDER HOLYFIELD
November 13, Las Vegas, Nevada
1992

Setting the stage: Holyfield, who came in far too light at 205 pounds (30 less than his challenger), was making the fourth defense of the world heavyweight title he had won from Buster Douglas. The 25-year-old Bowe, a product of the Brooklyn badlands, was defeated by Lennox Lewis in his bid for Olympic glory, but beat Lewis in the title race, securing his shot by fouling his way to a seventh-round victory over Pierre Coetzer. "I'm going to knock out the little man you call the heavyweight champion of the world," Bowe said.

What happened: Bowe used his heavy jab to make openings for his right, and when they fought up close he used short hooks and uppercuts, showing his mastery of infighting. Holyfield responded with rapid-fire combinations. In the 10th, Bowe detonated an uppercut under Holyfield's chin and continued to batter him around the ring with huge, accurate, hooks, uppercuts, and crosses. But then Bowe began to tire, and Holyfield was able to regroup and drive the bigger man across the ring with his own hard shots. Still, it was Bowe's round, and by dropping Holyfield with a right behind the head in round 11 and closing strongly in the 12th, he won a clear decision by scores of 115-112 and 117-110 (twice).

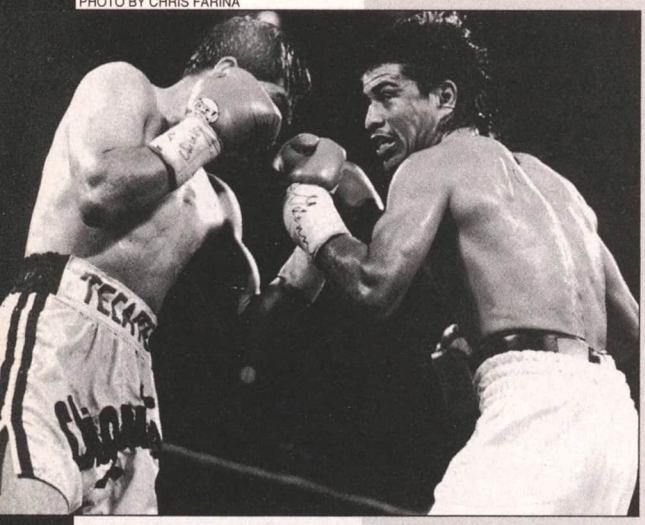
Other candidates: Azumah Nelson KO 8 Jeff Fenech, Lennox Lewis KO 2 Razor Ruddock, Michael Moorer KO 5 Bert Cooper

Why Bowe-Holyfield won: Both boxed with skill, power, and grit, with the 10th round one of the finest in heavyweight history.

Bowe lands a right to Holyfield's head

1993 MICHAEL CARBAJAL KO 7 CHIQUITA GONZALEZ
March 13, Las Vegas, Nevada

PHOTO BY CHRIS FARINA



Gonzalez and Carbajal gun for dominance

Setting the stage: Not since the days of Jimmy Wilde had men this small come close to superstar status in American boxing, as 25-year-old Carbajal, an Olympic silver medalist in his third year as IBF junior flyweight titleholder, met the 27-year-old Gonzalez, Mexico's WBC titlist. There was huge excitement about this U.S.-Mexican rivalry and their pay-per-view showdown generated unprecedented publicity and purses for the little men, with Carbajal becoming the first sub-lightweight to earn a million-dollar purse.

What happened: A vicious brawl from the first bell, with the 5'1" Mexican getting the better of the 5'5" American, dropping him for the first time in his career in the second round and then again in the fifth. By the end of the sixth round, it looked certain that Gonzalez would prevail. He was up by four points on each of the cards, and Carbajal was bleeding from a gash on the right eyebrow. But at the end of the seventh round, "Little Hands Of Stone" found the answer to his problems in a peach of a left hook that put Chiquita down and out for the count, with one second remaining in the round.

Other candidates: Pernell Whitaker D 12 Julio Cesar Chavez, Evander Holyfield W 12 Riddick Bowe, Simon Brown KO 4 Terry Norris

Why Carbajal-Gonzalez won: A unification bout that delivered even more than anticipated, with Carbajal justifying his million-dollar-man status with his chilling, come-from-behind knockout punch.

1994 JORGE CASTRO KO 9 JOHN DAVID JACKSON
December 10, Monterrey, Mexico

PHOTO BY JAY LASH

Castro and Jackson pose with Don King

Setting the stage: The background is complicated. Jackson, an elusive American southpaw, was stripped of the IBF middleweight title he lifted from Reggie Johnson in 1993. Castro, a veteran Argentinean brawler, then won the vacant title with a dubious points win over Johnson. This left the way open for Jackson and Castro to settle the score.

What happened: It was as one-sided as it gets for almost nine rounds. The 31-year-old, 5'10" Jackson bedazzled the 5'9", 27-year-old Castro, using his five-inch reach advantage to jab him silly from long range. After eight rounds, Jackson was ahead by nine, seven, and a compassionate five points. The bloodied Castro had one eye closed, the other half-closed. Late in the round nine, Jackson moved in to finish it, pummeling Castro with rapid-fire combinations. Referee Stan Christodoulou allowed the beating to continue, but finally moved in to stop it. At that moment, Castro fired a monstrous right that landed flush on Jackson's jaw. The American went down, struggled up, but after one more knockdown, it was over at the 2:54 mark.

Other candidates: Frankie Randall W 12 Julio Cesar Chavez, George Foreman KO 10 Michael Moorer, Mike McCallum W 12 Jeff Harding, Arturo Gatti W 12 Tracey Patterson

Why Castro-Jackson won: It all hinged on the ending. After a comprehensive boxing lesson, rounded off with a severe beating, the other guy wins courtesy of one massive punch.

SAMAN SORJATURONG KO 7 CHIQUITA GONZALEZ
July 15, Inglewood, California
1995

Setting the stage: Gonzalez, 29, had established himself as a superstar among little men and was made a 17-1 betting favorite to overcome Thailand's Sorjaturong, whose resume hardly compared with the great Mexican's. Even in Bangkok, the betting action revolved around which round Gonzalez would score a knockout. "Chiquita was my hero," said the 26-year-old Thai after the fight. "I studied how he fought."

What happened: Chiquita, a versatile but hotheaded boxer-puncher, employed the attacking style that made him so popular. He dished out a sustained beating, while still taking a worrying number of rights himself. One of Sorjaturong's eyes was cut, the other swollen. He went down in the fifth and again in the sixth. At the end of round six, ringside physician Adam Karns said he would stop the fight unless there was a change in fortunes. Meanwhile, Gonzalez' trainer, Nacho Beristain, told him to box rather than brawl. Sorjaturong charged out and the macho Mexican met him ring center. The Thai landed two huge rights on Gonzalez' suspect chin and he went down hard, bleeding from the eye and nose. Gonzalez lurched about, and after a few more seconds it was stopped, without protest.

Other candidates: Pernell Whitaker W 12 Julio Cesar Vasquez, Evander Holyfield W 10 Ray Mercer, Riddick Bowe KO 8 Evander Holyfield

Why Sorjaturong-Gonzalez won: An all-action, two-knockdown slugfest, dominated by a veteran champion, ending in a sudden, two-punch knockout victory for the underdog.

Sorjaturong clips Gonzalez with a left hook

EVANDER HOLYFIELD KO 11 MIKE TYSON
November 9, Las Vegas, Nevada
1996

BY JED JACOBSOHN/GETTY IMAGES

Setting the stage: Tyson vacated the WBC heavyweight title rather than accommodate Lennox Lewis, and instead settled on Holyfield, who'd looked so-so in his previous two fights. Tyson's co-manager, Rory Holloway, speculated that Iron Mike might kill the underdog, which actually seemed a possibility going in.

What happened: The 215-pound Commander Vander showed he was not intimidated. Tyson, 222, fired his big guns, but Holyfield held firm and fought back. The 34-year-old challenger grabbed, butted, and threw quick, hard punches, and in this way sapped Tyson's strength, knowing he could be confident in his own superb conditioning. Holyfield landed a well-timed left hook in the sixth round, and Tyson went down, sliding across the canvas on his butt. At the end of the 10th, Holyfield hammered Tyson with heavy, unanswered punches. Tyson wobbled back to his corner, dazed and depleted. Holyfield pounced on him at the start of round 11, driving him into the ropes, where he pounded Tyson until referee Mitch Halpern stopped the fight.

Other candidates: Arturo Gatti KO 6 Wilson Rodriquez, Lennox Lewis W 10 Ray Mercer, Michael Carbajal W 12 Melchor Cob Castro

Why Holyfield-Tyson won: Holyfield sprang the ultimate comeback. He pulled off one of boxing's greatest upsets by standing up to Tyson's bombs, breaking him down, and then battering him to defeat.

Holyfield floors Tyson

1997 ARTURO GATTI KO 5 GABRIEL RUELAS
October 4, Atlantic City, New Jersey

PHOTO BY MARTY ROSENGARTEN

Gatti left hooks Ruelas into sudden defeat

Setting the stage: Gatti had developed a reputation as a thrill-a-minute guy with his 1996 brink-of-defeat victory over Wilson Rodriguez. He was making the fourth defense of the IBF super featherweight title against Ruelas, who'd picked up three wins since losing the WBC belt to Azumah Nelson.

What happened: They both threw hard bodyblows in round one, some of Ruelas' on the low side. In the second, Gatti landed a right uppercut that shook his challenger, and later a heavy left hook to the jaw. Ruelas was warned again for low blows in the third, which Gatti ended with another solid left hook. Ruelas was hurt early in the fourth, but in the final minute he took over, wobbling Gatti with a left uppercut and then landing 15 unanswered punches. They were now even on points, but the challenger had momentum on his side. They traded heavy blows until Gatti finally registered with a battery of punches, ending with a whistling left hook. Ruelas went down flat on his back, but somehow managed to pull himself up. Even so, referee Benny Esteves waved it off at the 2:22 mark.

Other candidates: Naseem Hamed KO 4 Kevin Kelley, Oscar De La Hoya W 12 Pernell Whitaker, Johnny Tapia W 12 Danny Romero

Why Gatti-Ruelas won: A vicious scrap, with Gatti on the brink of stoppage defeat, only to come back with a fight-ending left hook.

1998 IVAN ROBINSON W 10 ARTURO GATTI
August 22, Atlantic City, New Jersey

PHOTO BY FRANK VITUCCI

Robinson hammers Gatti with a right

Setting the stage: Neither man was the flavor of the month at the time. Gatti was coming off a decisive TKO defeat to Angel Manfredy, while Robinson had decisive losses to Philip Holiday and Israel Cardona on his log. It seemed like a must-win for both men, but turned out to be good for the winner and loser alike.

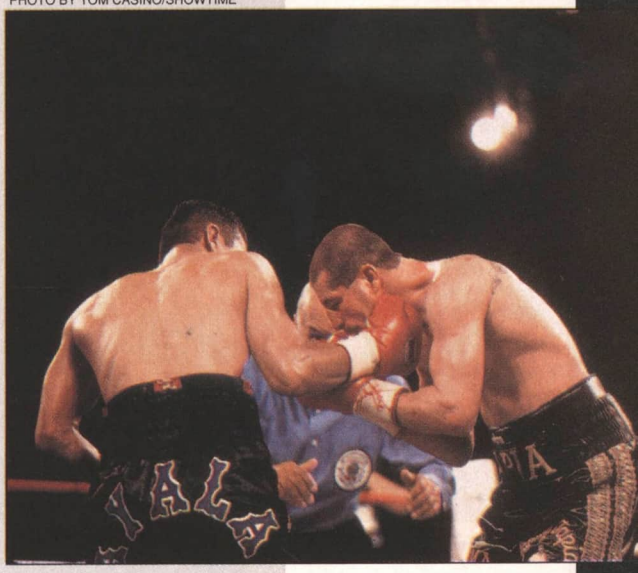
What happened: Robinson started at high speed with his educated jab, snappy uppercut, rapid-fire combinations, and nifty footwork. But late in the fourth he went down from a left hook and took a seven-count. Gatti's punches were harder, but Robinson was outworking him, and by the end of round five, he'd opened a cut under his rival's virtually closed left eye. Gatti came out fast for round six, but after two minutes, Robinson fired off a left hook-right cross that staggered him. "Thunder" roared back by wobbling Robinson with a right, but over the next three rounds Robinson boxed effectively from long range, shaking Gatti with a left hook near the end of the ninth. In the final minute of round 10, Robinson was staggered by a left hook and battered until the bell. The scores were 98-93 and 96-94 for Robinson, and 96-93 for Gatti.

Other candidates: Ricardo Lopez W 12 Rosendo Alvarez, Lennox Lewis KO 5 Shannon Briggs, Naseem Hamed KO 7 Wilfredo Vazquez

Why Robinson-Gatti won: Classic clash of speed and skill against power, with non-stop action the whole way.

PAULIE AYALA W 12 JOHNNY TAPIA
June 26, Las Vegas, Nevada
1999

PHOTO BY TOM CASINO/SHOWTIME



Ayala's right finds Tapia's jaw

Setting the stage: Tapia was already a folk hero, a two-division titlist whose battles against drug addiction and the horrors of his childhood were even more compelling than his ring career. Ayala had an impressive record, but was the underdog against the much-loved WBA bantamweight titleholder.

What happened: Tapia pushed his rival before the first bell, but the 29-year-old Texas southpaw kept his composure, using his right jab and hook to pick up the points. Much of the early action was on the inside, where the 5'5" Ayala was more effective than the 5'6" Tapia. Still, the 32-year-old titleholder landed some impressive blows of his own, particularly to the body. In rounds five and six, he stepped it up, landing some eye-catching hooks and rights. Ayala, his eyes swelling, came back in the seventh, firing off breathtaking combinations and solid bodypunches. Tapia, bleeding from a head cut, rattled Ayala with a thumping right late in the 10th round and held his edge in the 11th, but he played and taunted in the final round while Ayala stuck to his task. Scores were 116-113 (twice) and 115-114—all for Ayala.

Other candidates: Lennox Lewis W 12 Evander Holyfield, Fernando Vargas W 12 Winky Wright, Felix Trinidad W 12 Oscar De La Hoya, Erik Morales W 12 Wayne McCullough

Why Ayala-Tapia won: A close, extremely busy contest between two highly skilled little men with the result in doubt down until the final bell.

ERIK MORALES W 12 MARCO ANTONIO BARRERA
February 19, Las Vegas, Nevada
2000

PHOTO BY CHRIS FARINA

Barrera and Morales trade shots in epic duel

Setting the stage: This battle for Mexican boasting rights had been long in the brewing. Morales, the Tijuana tough guy of indigenous descent, resented the presence of his middle class Mexico City-based rival. Morales was the WBC super bantam titleholder; Barrera the WBO titlist at 122 pounds.

What happened: The 5'8" Morales, who had to strain to make the weight, was taken by surprise by the ferocity of Barrera's attack that included vicious bodyblows and flush rights to the chin. The 23-year-old "El Terrible" landed a hard right and left hook to the liver in the third and retained his momentum in the fourth, but the 5'6", 26-year-old Barrera rallied back in the middle rounds. In round nine, a Morales right opened a cut under Barrera's left eye. But Barrera outworked his foe in the 10th, opening a cut around the right eye. Late in the 12th, Barrera wobbled Morales with a left hook. When their legs tangled, Morales went down and took an eight-count. This seemed to settle matters in Barrera's favor, but the split decision went the other way with votes of 115-112 and 114-113 to Morales, and 114-112 for Barrera.

Other candidates: Shane Mosley W 12 Oscar De La Hoya, Felix Trinidad KO 12 Fernando Vargas, Yory Boy Campas KO 8 Tony Ayala Jr., Felix Trinidad W 12 David Reid

Why Morales-Barrera won: Despite the questionable decision, this one was a war for the ages—a high-tempo, high-intensity, high-class war between two great warriors at the peak of their powers.

2001 MICKY WARD W 10 EMANUEL BURTON (AUGUSTUS)
July 13, Hampton Beach, New Hampshire

PHOTO BY ANGIE CARLINO

Wards fires a right at Burton

Setting the stage: This was make-or-break territory for Burton, 26, an upper-class journeyman lightweight far better than his record suggested, and Ward, 35, a crowd-pleasing fringe contender with a habit of losing the big ones. Both had suffered recent defeats and needed this one to take the next step up.

What happened: "Irish Micky" went straight on the attack, pinning Burton on the ropes and pounding his body, while absorbing his share of counters. In the second, it was Burton's turn, as he landed flush with long, fast blows. But in the third, Ward hurt him with a bodypunch. Round five was one of the best of the fight with Burton landing several booming left hooks before absorbing a flush right to the face. In the seventh, it was Burton who went to the body, prompting a wonderful exchange. By round nine, Ward was nearly exhausted, but kept throwing bodybombs, one of which dropped Burton. They threw everything they had in the 10th, with Ward firing 175 punches. The result seemed in the balance, but two judges returned insulting hometown scores of 98-90 and 96-91, counterbalanced by a more realistic 96-94.

Other candidates: Julio Gonzalez W 12 Julian Letterlough, Antwun Echols KO 3 Charles Brewer, Thomas Tate KO 4 Omar Sheika, Paulie Ayala W 12 Bones Adams, Ezra Sellers KO 4 Carl Thompson

Why Ward-Burton won: Ward's body attack was matched by Burton's superior hand speed, producing a thrilling non-stop punch-up.

2002 MICKY WARD W 10 ARTURO GATTI
May 18, Uncasville, Connecticut

PHOTO BY WILL HART/HBO

Ward has Gatti looking very unhappy

Setting the stage: Ward was coming off a disputed loss to Jesse James Leija, Gatti a win over Terron Millett, following a bad loss to Oscar De La Hoya. They needed each other.

What happened: Gatti initially made good use of the long range boxing skills his trainer, Buddy McGirt, had emphasized, but at the end of round three, Ward drew him into a brawl. It pitted the Irish American's bodypunches against the quicker hands of the Italian-Canadian. Gatti was docked a crucial point for a low blow in the fourth. In round five he rocked Ward with a left hook to the head, only to get hurt himself soon afterward. Gatti rediscovered his footwork to take rounds six and seven, but Ward hammered him around the ring in the eighth and dropped him with a sickening left hook to the liver early in the ninth. Somehow, Gatti survived the follow-up battering and fired back with interest until wounded by a right to the temple and pounded on the ropes. Gatti shaded the 10th, but the controversial, majority decision went to Ward by 95-93, 94-93, and 94-94.

Other candidates: Marco Antonio Barrera W 12 Erik Morales II, Vernon Forest W 12 Shane Mosley, Floyd Mayweather W 12 Jose Luis Castillo, Oscar De La Hoya KO 11 Fernando Vargas

Why Ward-Gatti won: This one is hard to beat. Gatti was drawn into an atavistic brawl that swung this way and that, ending in a disputed decision. Round nine was described by Emanuel Steward as "the round of the century."

ARTURO GATTI W 10 MICKY WARD
June 7, Atlantic City, New Jersey 2003

Setting the stage: Gatti had convincingly outpointed Ward in their return encounter six months earlier by dropping his rival in the third round and then sticking to McGirt's instructions to box off the jab, even though he had broken his hand along the way. This one was the rubber match.

What happened: Gatti started in fine style, bedazzling Ward with his speed, skill, and crisp punching, but in the fourth round, he once again broke his right hand, this time with a punch to his rival's hip. He dropped his hand, winced in pain, and thereafter used the right sparingly. Gatti was dominating round six, when Ward finally broke through in the final seconds and dropped Gatti heavily with an overhand right to the head. Gatti came back in the seventh, but was briefly drawn into a firefight. In the final round, they both slugged it out till the final bell. The unanimous decision went to Gatti by 96-93 (twice) and 97-92.

Other candidates: Ricardo Mayorga KO 3 Vernon Forrest, Lennox Lewis KO 7 Vitali Klitschko, Shane Mosley W 12 Oscar De La Hoya, Manny Pacquiao KO 11 Marco Antonio Barrera

Why Gatti-Ward won: The rubber match ended one of the great rivalries in recent ring history. Gatti's fine display of long-range boxing, his broken right hand, the sixth round knockdown, and the periodic fireworks produced a grand finale.

PHOTO BY AL BELLO/GETTY IMAGES

Ward and Gatti give and receive

MARCO ANTONIO BARRERA W 12 ERIK MORALES
November 27, Las Vegas, Nevada 2004

Setting the stage: This pair fought a return at featherweight with Barrera taking a disputed unanimous decision, but Morales was the clear favorite going in to the rubber match. He had looked impressive in his six subsequent wins, whereas Barrera had suffered a bad loss to Manny Pacquiao a year before. Moreover, it was fought at 130 pounds, which seemingly suited the naturally bigger "El Terrible."

What happened: Barrera boxed with intelligent aggression to land regularly with his hard, well-timed hooks and uppercuts. Morales had his moments, but Barrera was quicker and more versatile. It was only in the seventh round that the WBC titleholder stamped his mark on the fight, landing several crunching rights. But Barrera roared back in the ninth, with his left hook doing damage. The later rounds were intense, with both men taking turns dishing out punishment, particularly in the brutal 12th. By the final bell, Morales sported a virtually closed right eye and a broken nose, while the Barrera looked dog-tired. Still, it seemed a clear-cut win for the man from Mexico City, with the only surprise the closeness of the scores: 115-113, 115-114, and 114-114.

Other candidates: Winky Wright W 12 Shane Mosley, Cory Spinks W 12 Zab Judah, Glen Johnson KO 9 Roy Jones

Why Barrera-Morales won: This one was not quite as good as their first encounter, but better than the second, with the smaller but more versatile Barrera pulling off a minor surprise by scoring the first clear win of the series.

PHOTO BY WILL HART/HBO

Barrera jolts Morales with a left uppercut

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2005 DIEGO CORRALES KO 10 JOSE LUIS CASTILLO

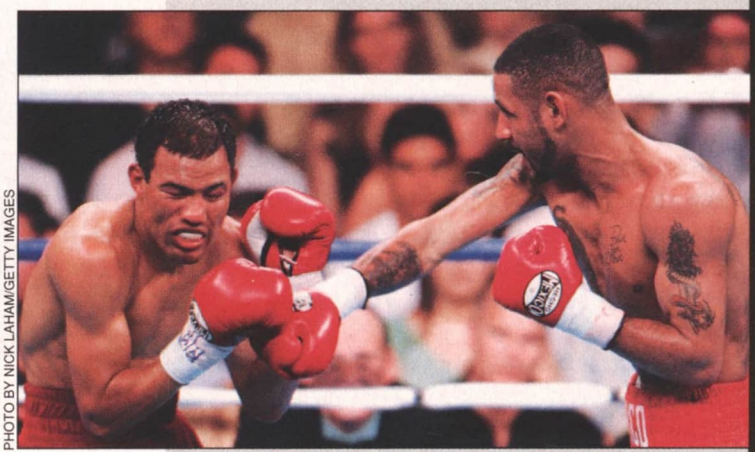
May 7, Las Vegas, Nevada

Setting the stage: World champion Castillo was the man to beat at lightweight following wins over Juan Lazcano and Joel Casamayor. But Corrales, who was coming off a fine stoppage victory over Acelino Freitas, was the more marketable name.

What happened: Despite his three-inch height advantage, the 5'11" Corrales opted to fight at close quarters. Castillo was cut in the fourth, but succeeded in rocking Corrales with heavy rights and left hooks, one of which raised a lump under Corrales' left eye in the seventh. Castillo was wobbled himself by a left hook late in the round. Going into the 10th, Corrales was ahead on two of the cards, perhaps due to his ability to close rounds strongly. Castillo, however, dropped his rival with a left hook. Corrales spat out his mouthpiece, gaining recovery time. Castillo dropped him again, and, once more, Corrales spat out his gumshield, earning a point's deduction from referee Tony Weeks. Once back on his feet, Corrales nailed the advancing Castillo with a huge right to the chin, and then, 20 seconds later, drove the Mexican to the ropes and pounded his head with lefts and rights until Weeks stopped the fight at the 2:06 mark.

Other candidates: Ricky Hatton KO 11 Kostya Tzsyu, Zab Judah KO 9 Cory Spinks, Miguel Cotto KO 7 Ricardo Torres, Tomasz Adamek W 12 Paul Briggs

Why Corrales-Castillo won: Corrales' remarkable final round comeback was enough to make it, but the other nine rounds were extremely hot too, featuring absolute commitment, huge punches, and high-caliber back-and-forth action.



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Corrales clobbers Castillo with a right

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Bernard Hopkins

"I Need A Major Threat, Where If I Don't Win I'm Dead"

Bernard Hopkins didn't look much bigger with his clothes on, but when he peeled off his shirt halfway through the interview, you could see the difference, especially through his arms and upper body. Although he still didn't know whether or not he'd get the big heavyweight fight he craved when he visited THE RING's editorial office in early-November, Hopkins had started to beef up—and the p.r. campaign to get the fight was already at warp speed.

The main reason we asked to speak with Hopkins was to discuss his status as world light heavyweight champion. Knowing how frequently fighters change their minds about such things THE RING has continued to list B-Hop as champion despite his so-called retirement following the title-winning victory over Antonio Tarver in June. But with other worthy fighters eager to compete for the title, we wanted to get the definitive word from the champ's own lips. What he told THE RING Editor-in-Chief Nigel Collins only reinforced what we already thought: "The Executioner" still has a few heads he wants to lop off before hanging up his gloves for good. Collins reports:

"Although it's always a challenge to keep Bernard focused on the subject under discussion, he remains one of the most spellbinding interviews in all of sports. After the formal interview was over, he told me that the only fight he ever felt nervous about was his third Robert Allen fight. That was because he knew that if he lost, he'd never get a fight with Oscar De La Hoya. Today, he and De La Hoya are business partners, and the only thing Bernard is worried about is that a 6'3", 238-pound heavyweight will refuse to fight him."

The Ring: It's beginning to look more and more like you're going to fight again.

Bernard Hopkins: It has to be a meaningful fight. I don't want to fight just to fight. At this stage of my career, and knowing that I'm going to have to deal with a lot of topics—I thought you'd retired, I thought you promised your mother, etc.—I'm gonna make sure it means something in order to handle the possible backlash.

Like I've been saying, the fight I want the most is Oleg Maskaev. I need a major threat, where if I don't win I'm dead. I need that *is-he-crazy* kind of conversation going on. That's what sells in boxing. That's what my career has been about. I'm a daring person. I'm the kind of person who doesn't mind walking that tightrope.

The Ring: What is it about Maskaev that makes you so confident you can beat him?

BH: Maskaev is tailor-made for me; I know I can beat him. I have ring generalship, smarts, and speed. He's one-dimensional. The only thing he has working in his favor is that he's big. But he's not a giant. He's a puncher who has to get set and he has to get you to fight his type of fight. With Mackie Shilstone to prepare me, to put those 25 to 30 pounds on me, which I can carry because of my height and the width of my shoulders, Maskaev will be missing more and paying more. I see it as a cat-and-mouse game, with the mouse, Bernard Hopkins, beating the cat.

The Ring: Do you think a fight with Maskaev would sell?

BH: This is the modern-day Apollo Creed versus the Russian! But this Apollo Creed, Bernard Hopkins, is an Apollo Creed who is going to go in there to win, and make a reality of one of the focal boxing movies in history. That's how I presented the Maskaev fight to Mark Taffet, Kerry Davis, and Ross Greenberg at HBO. And they loved it.

The Ring: What if Maskaev loses his fight against Peter Okhello in Moscow on December 12?

BH: Then that fight would go away. I wouldn't even want to fight him.

The Ring: Let's say for discussion's sake that you get the Maskaev fight and you beat him. Would you fight again?

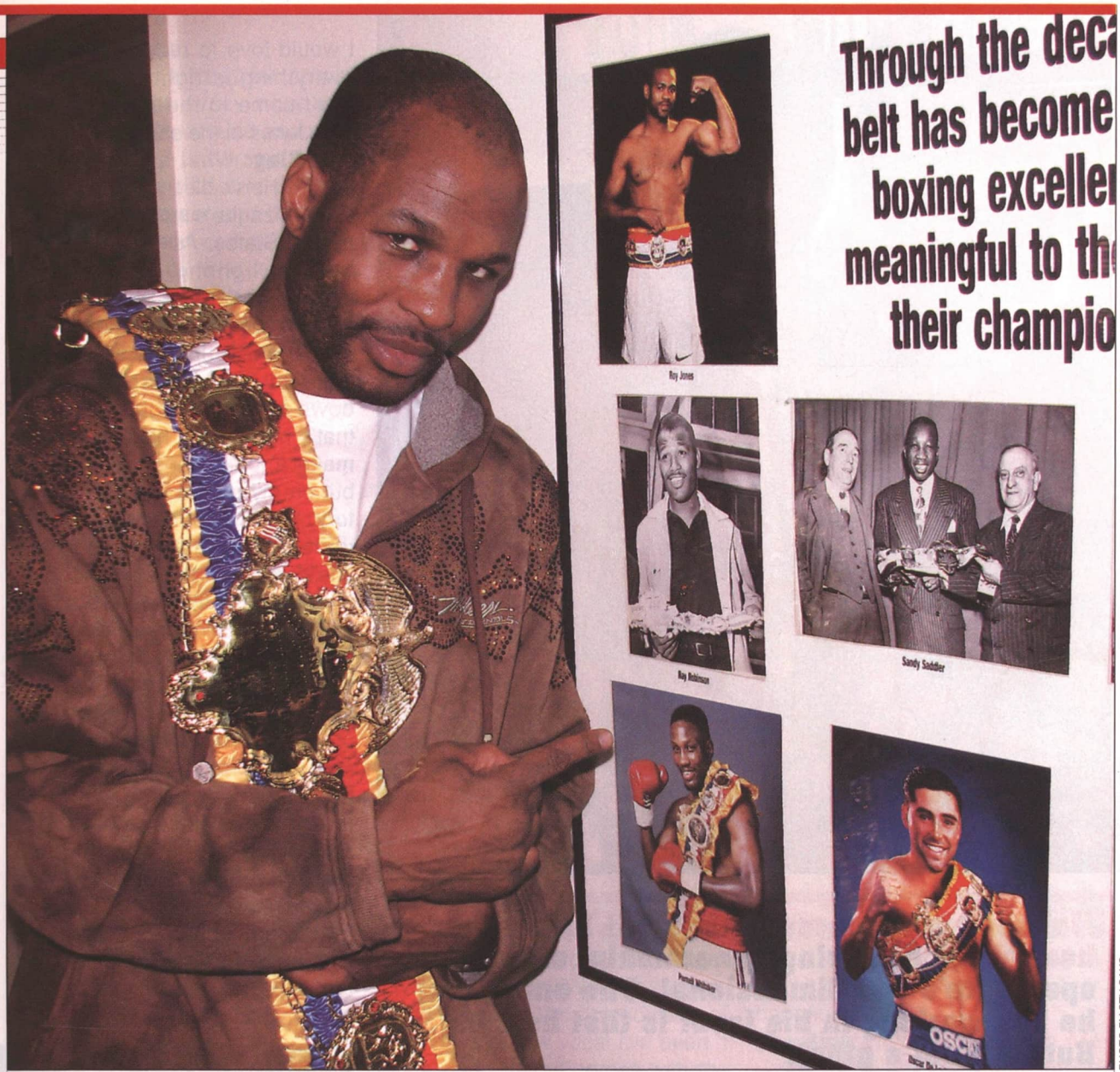


PHOTO BY STU SAKS

Hopkins checks out some photos of other famous champions with their RING *belts. The one B-Hop has over his shoulder is modeled after the one Ray Robinson is holding, which was presented to Sugar Ray when he regained the middleweight title from Randy Turpin in 1953.*

BH: At heavyweight, no, and probably nowhere else either. The heavyweight division is too big. That would be a suicidal attempt to go ahead and defend the heavyweight title, and I can't go back down. I think that's what Roy Jones' biggest mistake was, to fight John Ruiz and never try to make that fight with Evander Holyfield. That was his biggest mistake, and his body has been ruined ever since then. You hit him on the chin (*smacks his right fist into his left palm)* and he's down.

The Ring: But you said pretty much the same thing going into the Tarver fight.

BH: Tarver was too easy. It was so one-sided.

The Ring: Why was that? After the two losses to Jermain Taylor, a lot of people thought Tarver would beat you.

BH: People thought it was a desperate move. Why would I jump up two weight classes? If they knew what I had to go through all those years to stay at middleweight and rack up those 20 defenses, I'd get a blue ribbon for that. If they knew how disciplined I had to be through all those years, at 6'1" with a 36-inch waist, built like a wide receiver, the question should have been: How in the hell has Bernard been able to stay at 160? I've been my plotter and planner, and when I had those two fights with Jermain Taylor—not taking away from the fact that I believe I won those fights—but I saw that it was time to leave the middleweight division, that I've done all that I can do for all these years. My legacy, even if I never fought another fight afterward, was cemented. Nobody can alter or

PHOTO BY STU SAKS

“Maskaev is tailor-made for me; I know I can beat him. I have ring generalship, smarts, and speed. He’s one-dimensional. The only thing he has working in his favor is that he’s big. But he’s not a giant.”

touch it; all they can do is try to break it, so I said bring me Tarver.

The Ring: Since the Felix Trinidad fight, you’ve earned good money. You should be set for life, so I’m wondering how much of your desire to fight again is financial.

BH: About 20 percent. I ain’t gonna spend the money I have. I’m living off the interest. I make $300,000 a year off the interest, and the last time I asked my wife, she told me we could live off of $150,000 because everything we have is paid for.

The Ring: Speaking of your wife, what does she think about you fighting again?

BH: She told (New York *Daily News* boxing writer) Tim Smith she thinks I should take the Maskaev fight. And you know why? She wants me out of the damned house. I’m driving her crazy.

The Ring: If the Maskaev fight can’t be made, would you fight a rematch with Jones?

BH: Yes. I wanted to fight Roy Jones before the Tarver fight, but he’s having a rocky relationship with HBO, and they didn’t feel that the fight was worthy of buying. Still, I would love to redeem myself, if everything is right. I mean Roy can’t come to the table like he’s Roy Jones of the early-2000s.

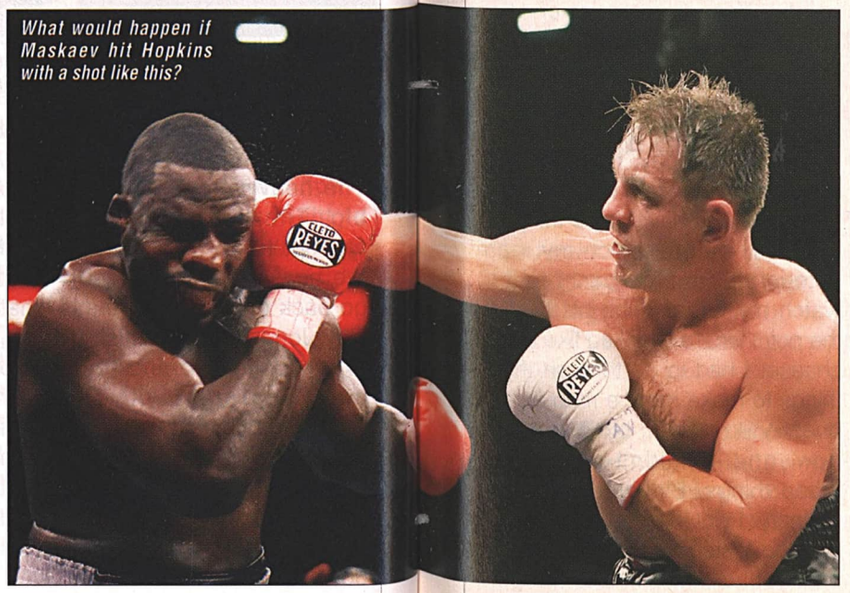
The Ring: What about Joe Calzaghe? He’s called you out.

BH: Calzaghe’s not known in the United States. As far as I’m concerned, fighting Joe Calzaghe doesn’t give me a legitimate excuse to be able to handle some of the backlash. People will be asking, why are you dropping back down to 168 to fight Calzaghe, that’s not making history. It would make a lot of sense on his part, but on my part, it wouldn’t be history. Also, I don’t think I’ll be the underdog in that fight, and with Joe coming off the fight with Bika, it won’t be a thing where people say, “Wow, Bernard is fighting *this* guy!” I need a major threat.

The Ring: So let me get this straight. Regardless of what kind of money was offered, you wouldn’t fight Joe Calzaghe?

BH: I didn’t say that. If the money is right, I would fight Joe Calzaghe. But not at 168 pounds. Calzaghe would have to move up to light heavyweight.

The Ring: The vast majority of fighters do not retire permanently until they take a bad beating. That’s never happened to you, but nobody beats Father Time.



What would happen if Maskaev hit Hopkins with a shot like this?

BH: I feel that’s true, for some. But I feel that every now and then, one comes around and people can’t really understand why he’s being guarded and protected. Take my career and the style of my career and compare it to, say, Arturo Gatti, who is a good friend of mine. I thought his career was done 10 years ago. And he’s had some great fights since then. But I hate to think about how he’s going to be in his 60s and 70s.

The Ring: But isn’t time catching up with you too?

BH: Things have slowed down for me, compared to when I was 25, 26, 27, 28. But you know what? That’s the way the fight game is now. With the lack of talent, right now an average guy can become great in boxing. And if you’re beyond average, then you can stand out and glide a long time.

The Ring: Let’s revisit the two Taylor fights. I’d always felt that if you had fought him with the same intensity and passion that you fought Trinidad, you would have won both fights. But I haven’t seen that same Bernard Hopkins who stopped Trinidad since, so I wonder if you can still fight that way anymore.

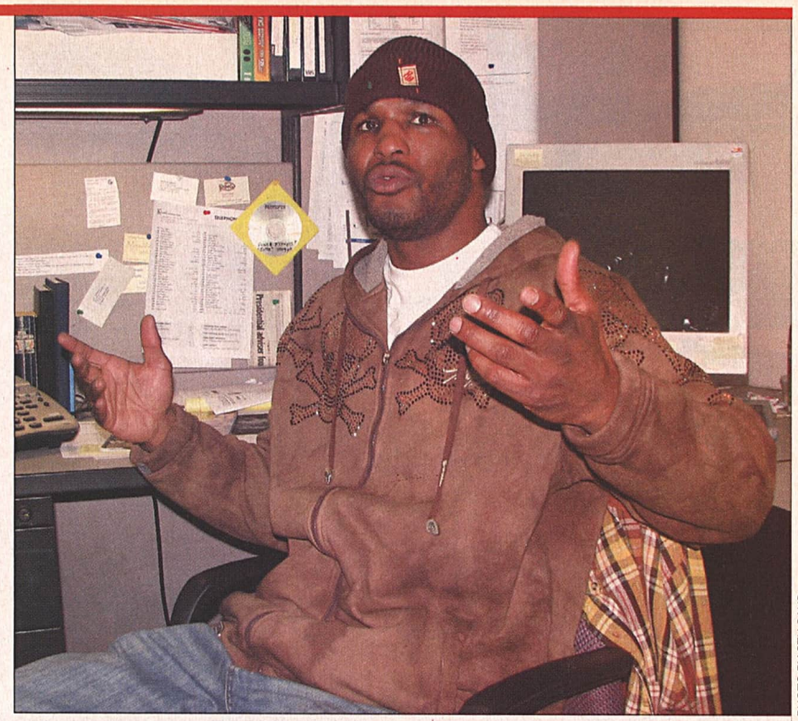


PHOTO BY STU SAKS

“That’s the way the fight game is now. With the lack of talent, right now an average guy can become great in boxing. And if you’re beyond average, then you can stand out and glide a long time.”

BH: The rule for me is that I have to be more extraordinary than other champions. Why? Well, it has more to do with what I’ve done outside of the ring and how vocal I’ve been. I understand that; it comes with the territory. But what I did with the Jermain Taylor fights was expose the things I’ve been talking about for so many years. When Duane Ford (who scored the 12th round of the first fight for Taylor, a round virtually everybody else gave to Hopkins) made that call, it basically opened up a whole new can of worms. Everywhere I went I heard from the fans who said, “Bernard, they shouldn’t have done that to the type of champion you are.”

The feedback I got is that I had become more of an icon (after losing to Taylor) by letting things manifest, instead of just talking about them. As the days went by and I had enough knowledge to realize what God was doing, I said it was the best thing that ever happened.

The Ring: Hold on a second. Are you trying to say that you’re happier losing the first Taylor fight than you would have been winning? You sure didn’t feel that way when it happened.

BH: I had to see the vision first, I had to sit back and analyze. Where is Jermain Taylor’s career now compared to Bernard Hopkins’?

The Ring: Okay, if that’s the way you feel, I accept that. But let’s go back to the original question: Could you, when you fought Taylor, have fought with the same intensity and aggression you did against Trinidad?

Naazim Richardson (Hopkins’ trainer)**:** I think I can help answer that question. Bernard has

PHOTO BY STU SAKS

"Everywhere I went I heard from the fans who said, 'Bernard, they shouldn't have done that to the type of champion you are.'"

become a much more cerebral fighter since the Trinidad fight, so we won't see him taking the same sort of chances he used to take. That passion won't return because some of it comes from youth and ignorance.

BH: Not only that, but you know what was riding on that fight, two weeks after 9/11. There were 20,000 in the room and I'm not gonna let this guy whip my ass and let his country see me pay for throwing down their flag. There was a lot riding on me to deliver that night. That night I was possessed.

The Ring: When you do finally stop fighting, will your work with Golden Boy Promotions keep you satisfied?

BH: Absolutely, it's satisfying now. I'm not a front man. I have a $500,000 per year budget, and that is to sign fighters and to do shows at the Borgata (Hotel and Casino in Atlantic City). I have 10 dates to put on shows at the Borgata in 2007, which is huge. They are not messing with any other promoter; I'm exclusive. Also, Demetrius (Hopkins) is fighting in Texas on November 25 (against Rogelio Castaneda) for the number-one vacancy. I spoke to Marion Muhammad of the IBF, and Demetrius will be in the same position I was in when I fought Roy Jones, number-one contender.

The Ring: Why are you doing business with an alphabet organization when you criticized and fought against them for so many years?

BH: It's all business. Demetrius shouldn't be tied in with Bernard Hopkins' struggles in and out of the ring. It's not fair for me to hurt him or criticize anybody that could hurt a Golden Boy fighter. I can't go into a business situation with any vendetta. I know when to fight and I know when not to fight.

The Ring: Golden Boy is building a reputation as a progressive promoter that treats its fighters with respect. Throughout most of your career, you feuded with promoters. If you had been promoted by a company like Golden Boy from the start of your career, would things have been different for you?

BH: I don't think I would have become the fighter I am. If I didn't have to go through all that trouble outside of the ring, I think I'd have been weak in my personality and demeanor. My will and determination would never have been tested. Things had to happen. Yes, it was painful. Yes, it was a lot of court money. I gave up hundreds of thousands of dollars fighting for what I believe is right. That had to happen. I had to go to jail to be where I'm at today. I had to have nine year's of parole without a violation. I had to have these things in my life. I had to watch my mom deteriorate from cancer. I had to watch my father drink his liver to the point where it looked like Swiss cheese. I had to go through these things to make me the man I am. I questioned it then, but I look at it now, and if I didn't go through these things, I would have been ordinary. I would never know how it is to be tested under the gun, and until you're tested under the gun,

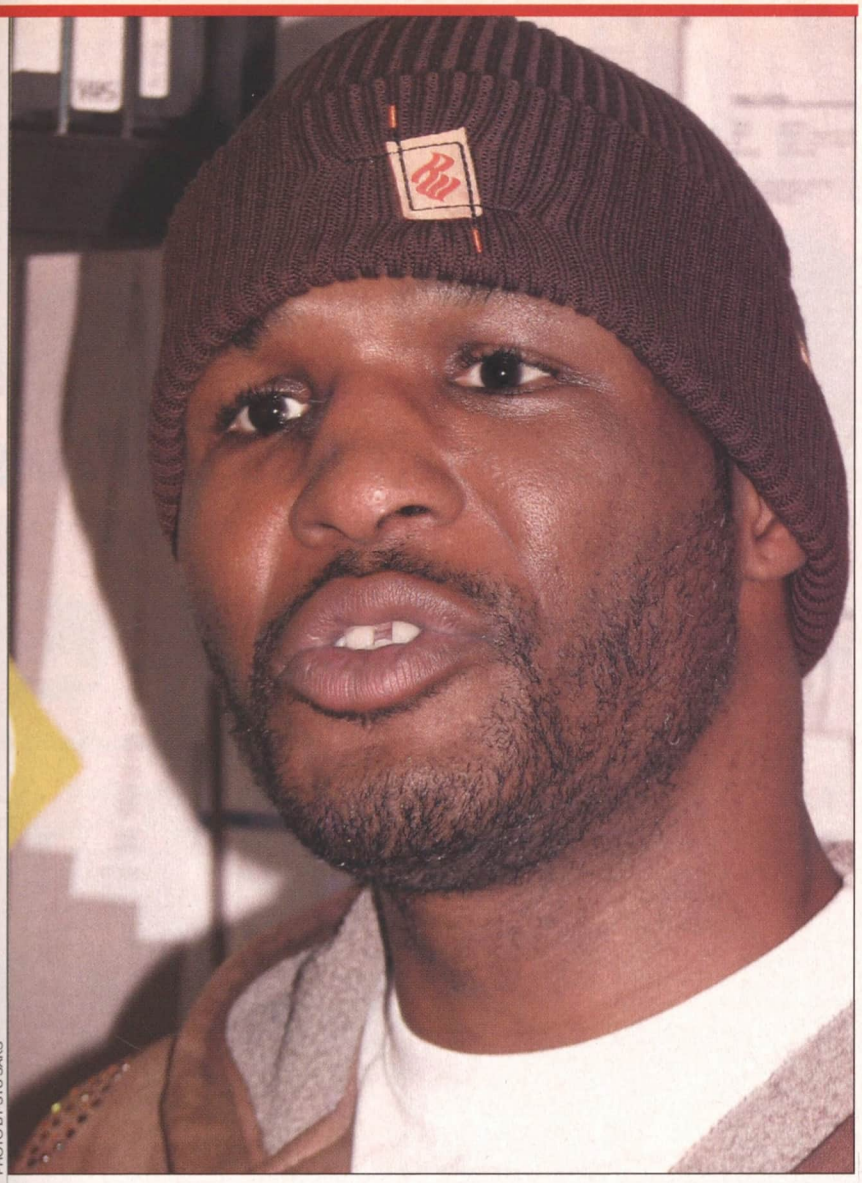


PHOTO BY STU SAKS

"I had to watch my mom deteriorate from cancer. I had to watch my father drink his liver to the point where it looked like Swiss cheese. I had to go through these things to make me the man I am."

you never really know what your capabilities and limitations are.

The Ring: A lot of ex-fighters become trainers when they stop fighting. Would you make a good trainer?

BH and **NR** (in unison): *Nope!*

BH: I'm too hard. I'd be trying to wake them up at 5 in the morning, and they'd be saying, "But I get up at six."

NR: Bernard is actually dangerous. When I used to have the kids in the gym with him, I used to tell the kids, "You can take from Bernard, but you can't do everything like Bernard."

The Ring: Do you still spar?

BH: Off and on.

The Ring: When was the last time?

BH: About three weeks ago, went eight straight rounds.

The Ring: Sounds like you're out of retirement already. ■

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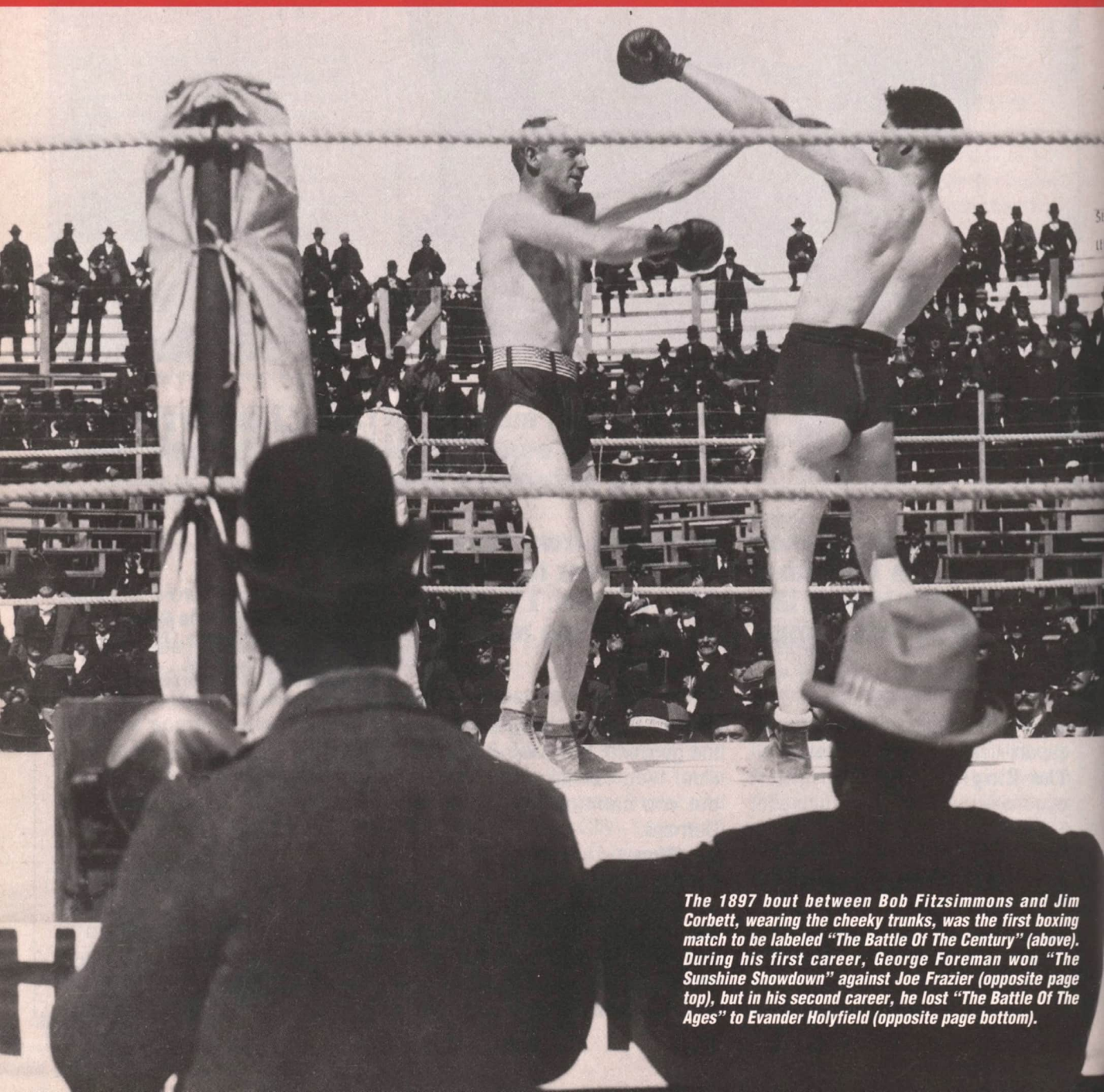
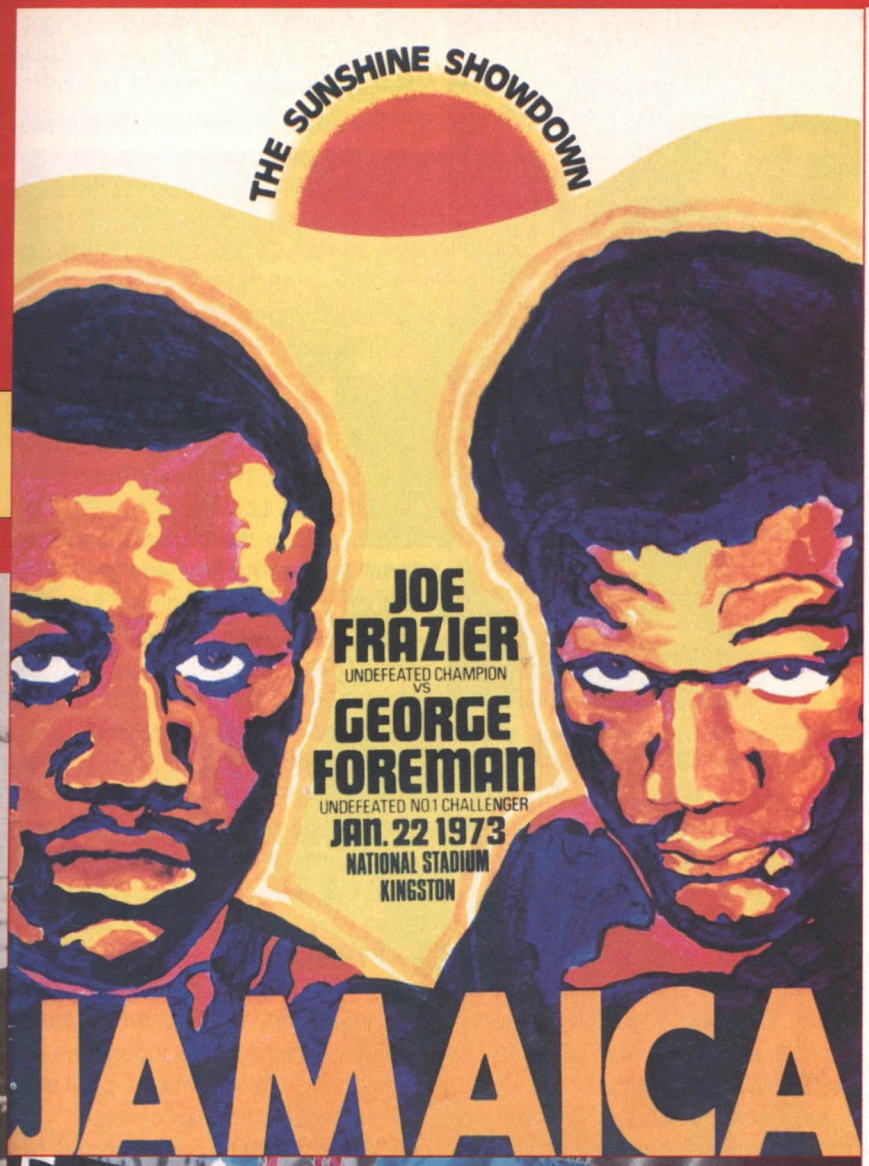
THE FEATURE THAT'LL TEACH YA

... About The History Of Giving Fights Creative Names



The 1897 bout between Bob Fitzsimmons and Jim Corbett, wearing the cheeky trunks, was the first boxing match to be labeled "The Battle Of The Century" (above). During his first career, George Foreman won "The Sunshine Showdown" against Joe Frazier (opposite page top), but in his second career, he lost "The Battle Of The Ages" to Evander Holyfield (opposite page bottom).



By Don Steinberg

There actually are no commission rules or sanctioning requirements saying a boxing match has to have a title like a Chuck Norris movie. It just seems that way these days.

Having a title for the fight on the poster—something like "The Brawl For It All" or "EXXecution Day" or "Arch Rivals: Meet Me In St. Louis"—has become as much a part of a modern boxing event as the weigh-in on Friday, or the staged trash-talk on Thursday. It didn't used to be this way. Joe Louis' final bout, against Rocky Marciano in 1951, wasn't called "Bombs Away" or "Blaze Of Glory" or "Twilight's Last Gleaming." Marciano vs. Louis was good enough back then.

So what happened? For all the scrutiny every other facet of the Sweet Science has received, it seems we've let the fight-naming phenomenon slide in under the ropes, unanalyzed.

Until now.

The world's first semi-scientific historical study of fight names is complete, and, if nothing else, the findings shine some light on how it's possible for a legitimate boxing match to be called "The Full Monty" (Calzaghe-Eubank, 1997) or "Up Close & Personal" (Hamed-Johnson, 1997) or "Presumption Of Innocence" (Tyson-Mathis, 1995). Who makes up these names? What themes get used the most? When did it start? Why?

"You want to create almost a mini-movie in the mind of the consumer. A good name does that," explains Mark Taffet, the HBO executive in charge of pay-per-view promotions. His marketing team has delivered "Battle Of The Ages" (an aging George Foreman vs. Evander Holyfield in 1999), "Bad Blood" (feuding Latinos Oscar De La Hoya and Fernando Vargas in 2002), and "Two Big" (giant opponents Lennox Lewis and Michael Grant in 2000), among others. "A good name allows your mind to dream and wander in all sorts of directions to make the fight bigger than life."

Taffet credits the name "Danger Zone" (De La Hoya-Mayorga, 2006) with increasing pay-per-view purchases of that bout by several thousand, as it gave fans the impression that Mayorga would

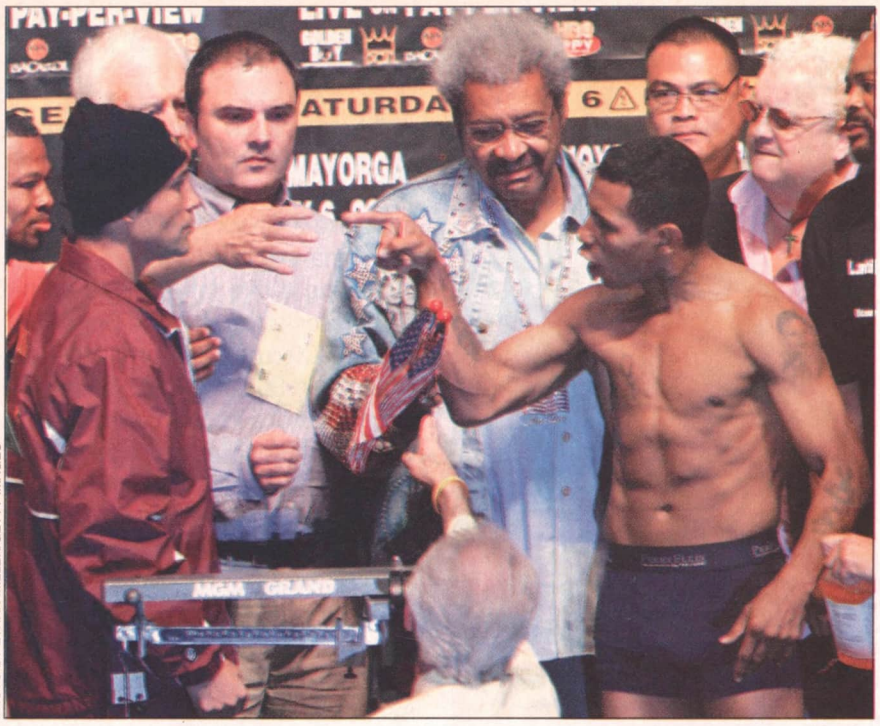


PHOTO BY ETHAN MILLER/GETTY IMAGES

HBO's Mark Taffet believes that naming the Oscar De La Hoya-Ricardo Mayorga bout "Danger Zone" helped attract massive pay-per-view sales of approximately 925,000. Once the bell rang, however, the only one in danger was Mayorga.

be a danger to De La Hoya (he wasn't). Taffet said his creative squad starts brainstorming catchphrase ideas as soon as a match is made, coordinating ideas with the fight's promoter.

Ideas come from different places. Fred Sternberg, who publicizes fights for various promoters, this year thought up "America's Last Line Of Defense" for Rahman-Maskaev II and "Manifist Destiny" for Corrales-Casamayor II, though he admits he borrowed the latter idea from "Octoberfist" (Lacy-Vanderpool, 2005).

As you might suspect, many boxing insiders point to one particular confetti-mouthed promoter as the progenitor of fight naming.

"It's a Don King thing," said promoter J Russell Peltz, who has four floors of rooms in his Philadelphia office covered with vintage boxing posters.

"I think it did start with King," agreed Al Bernstein, the Showtime analyst, who is a scholar in historic fights.

The experts are partially correct. Fights occasionally had taglines before King, including "The Sunshine Showdown" (Foreman-Frazier in Jamaica in 1973, into which King inserted himself after it was made). But King raised the nonsensical nomenclature to preposterous proportions, starting with "The Rumble In The Jungle" (Ali-Foreman, 1974) in Zaire.

"That comes from Muhammad Ali," King said. "He would make up these little rhymes, and then I would take it from the rhyme." (Ali and Bundini Brown chanted "Rumble, young man, rumble" before Ali's first Sonny Liston match.)

King mostly claims to draw inspiration from "legendary human experiences throughout the world that would be similar to what the fight would represent. Then you've got something that you can sell, and people catch on to the slogan. It becomes a household word from the tea parties to the pubs to the nightclubs."

King, who started reading literature and philosophy when he was in prison decades ago, pulled "The Sound And The Fury" from Shakespeare's *Macbeth* to make the Mike Tyson-Evander Holyfield rematch in 1997 sound like a classic. The words must have had special meaning to Holyfield when an enraged Tyson bit off a piece of his earlobe.

But King can't take all the credit. Fight naming goes way back. The first boxing extravaganza fought in the United States under Marquis of Queensberry rules was called "Carnival Of Champions." It featured three title fights in three days in New Orleans, during September 1892, climaxing in John L. Sullivan's loss to James J. Corbett.

For decades after that, an eager public embraced boxing without a lot of goofy taglines. It was mostly the press that advanced big matches with hyperbolic names. Papers called Corbett-Fitzsimmons (1897) the "Battle Of The Century." Papers later called Johnson-Jeffries (1910) the "Battle Of The Century" too, and the same went for Dempsey-Carpentier (1921) and Dempsey-Tunney II (1927), which got its current nickname, "The Long Count Fight," after the fact. Louis-Schmeling II (1938) was hyped as the "Fight Of The Century." So was Ali-Frazier 1 (1971), although it also was promoted as "The Fight." Julio Cesar Chavez-Pernell Whitaker (1993) also was "The Fight," and Hagler-Hearns (1985) lived up to its exclamation mark as "The Fight!"

Ali's trip to Dublin to fight Al Lewis (1972) was billed as "The Big Fight." Hagler-Leonard (1987) was the "Super-Fight," and so was the less super Mike Tyson vs. Bonecrusher Smith match the same year.

Where do you go from "SuperFight"?

"Fight Of The Millennium" (De La Hoya-Trinidad, 1999) was Bob Arum's idea," Taffet said. "We thought he was crazy, nutty, out of his mind." But it broke non-heavyweight sales records.

The evolution of boxing posters tells some of the story of fight names. Early posters occasionally bore taglines. A 1906 poster for a featherweight bout between Young Corbett and Dick Hylund bills it as "Battle Of The Little Gladiators." The 1961 rubber match between Floyd Patterson and Ingemar Johansson was "The Showdown," and the 1966 Emile Griffith-Joey Archer middleweight title fight at Madison Square Garden, on the poster, was called "Last Chance For The Irish."

But most slogans pre-King were very literal, and the standard format of boxing posters in the middle of the 20th century, with fighters' names in big block letters and simple photos, didn't leave much room to explore a theme.

The Joey Giardello-Johnny Saxton clash in 1953 had a small top line of text on the poster saying simply, "The Fight

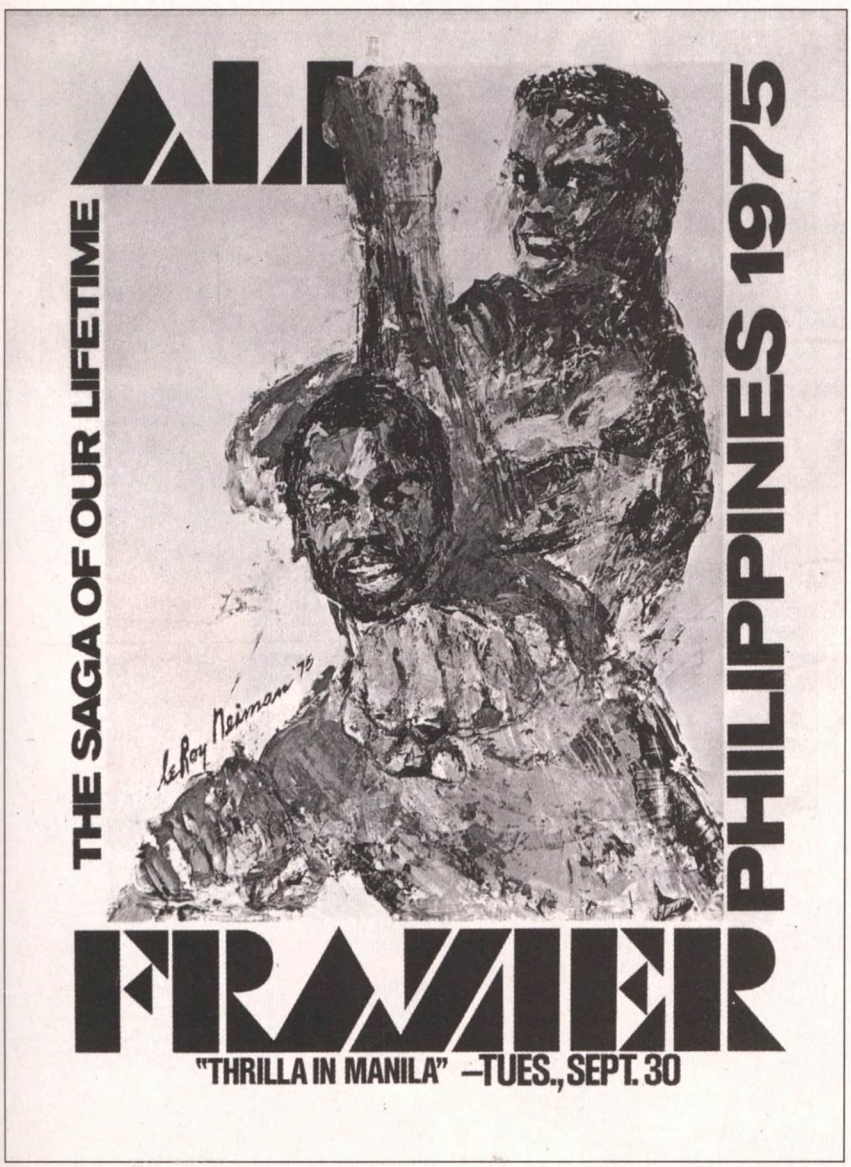
Every One Has Been Waiting To See." Giardello vs. Ray Robinson in 1962 was "Matched At Last." Those aren't really fight names so much as they're pitches for local ticket sales. Other posters of the same era used that top line that read: "Air conditioned. No TV."

But soon, the real name game began. King explains (sort of) that "Thrilla In Manila" (Ali-Frazier III, 1975) was inspired by U.S. military history in the South Pacific.

"I took the 'Thrilla In Manila' to demonstrate what endurance and courage would be, from Iwo Jima to Bataan, Corregidor, Saipan, during World War II. So liberation, freedom is there, and you've got the two greatest fighters in the world, signifying it's going to be a 'Thrilla In Manila'!

PHOTO BY STEVE MATTEO/HBO

Most boxing people agree that it was Don King who started the trend of giving all major promotions a name. One of his most famous creations was the "Thrilla In Manila," which was a bit of a misnomer, as the fight actually took place in Quezon City.



Manila was the central hub for our bases to take off. Now you've tied in every veteran around the world who contributed to the victories in Southeast Asia. They're tied into that thrilla!"

There you have it.

"HBO never uses the location of a fight in its title," Taffet said. After all, the point of watching boxing on cable is not caring where the fight is. But after Manila, geographic fight titles, many rhyming, came on fast and furious.

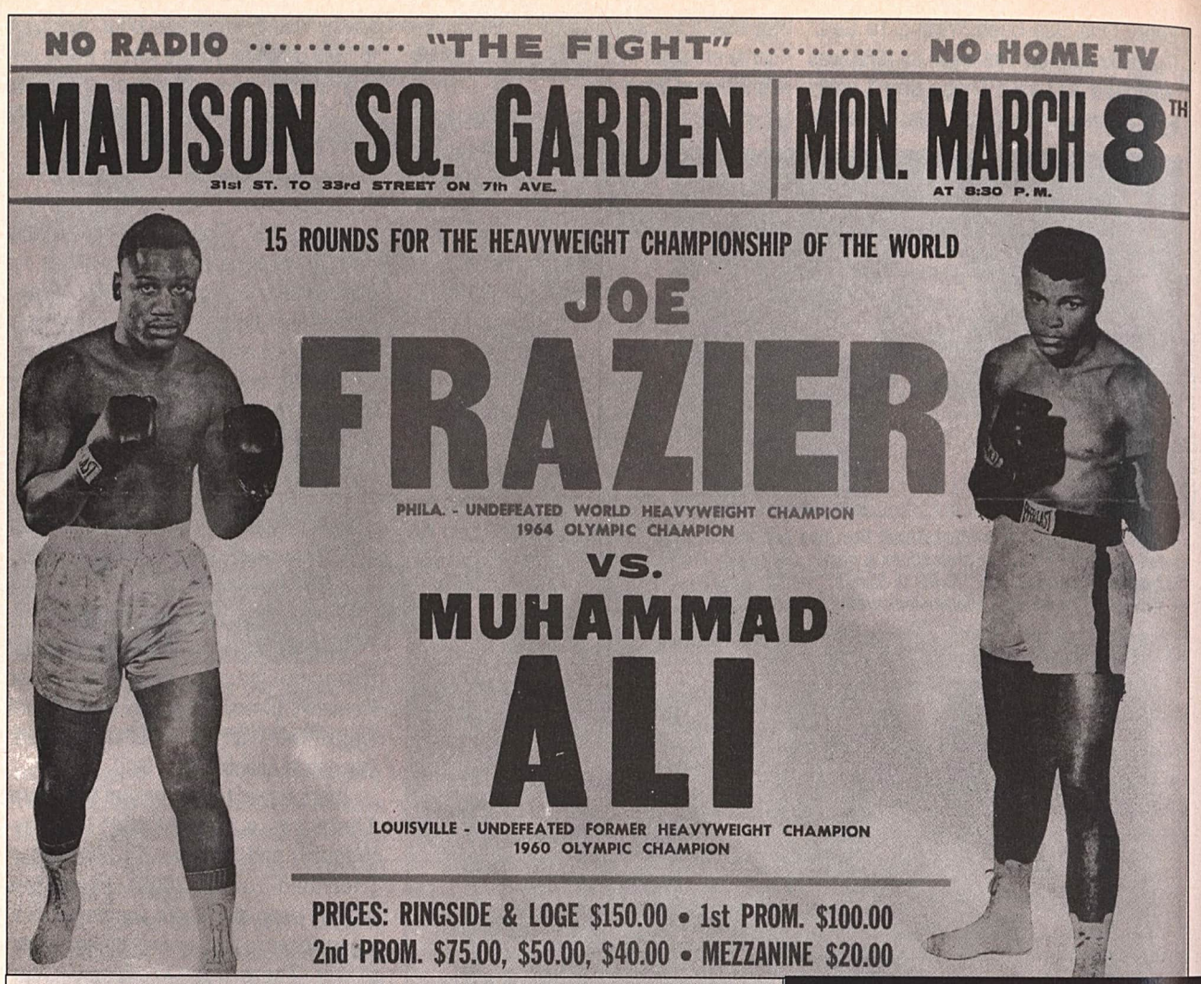
There was "The Battle Of New Orleans" (Ali-Spinks II, 1978) and "I Love New York" (Holmes-Weaver, 1979). There was "The Brawl In Montreal" (Leonard-Duran I, 1980), "Drama In Bahama" (Ali-Berbick, 1981), "Judgment Day In Monterrey" (Frankie Randall-Rodney Moore, 1994), and "Showdown In Motown" (Tyson-Golota, 2000).

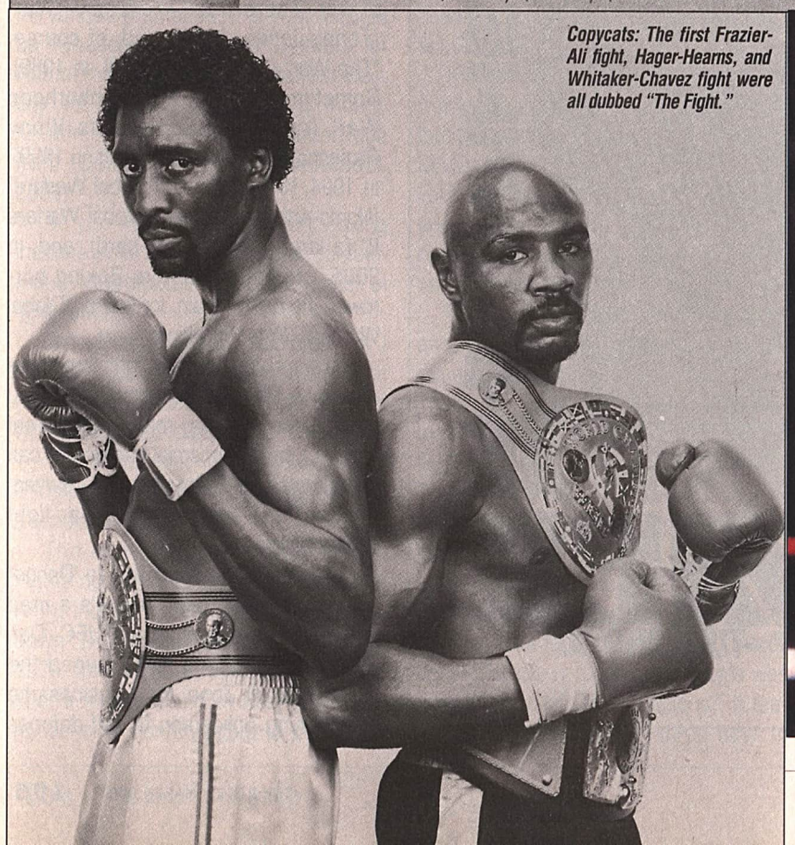
There was "The Reno Rumble" (Mancini-Chacon) and "The Reno Rematch" (Bramble-Mancini II). And don't forget "The War At The Shore" (Spinks-Cooney in Atlantic City, 1987).

Wars haven't been only at the shore. There was a "War At 154" (Mosley-Wright I) and the "War On October 4" (Holyfield-Toney, 2003). Promoters haven't been shy about comparing boxing matches to war, even in times of actual war. There was "The Uncivil War" (Toney-Jones, 1994), and, of course, "The War" (Leonard-Hearns II, in 1989). Sometimes it's just a "Neighborhood War" (rival New Englanders Vinny Pazienza and Dana Rosenblatt, in 1999). In 1994, King launched "Global Warfare" (Norris-Arthur) and then "Global Warfare II" (a large multinational card), and, in 2005, promoter Warriors Boxing borrowed the name again, for further "Global Warfare" (Peter-Hawkins).

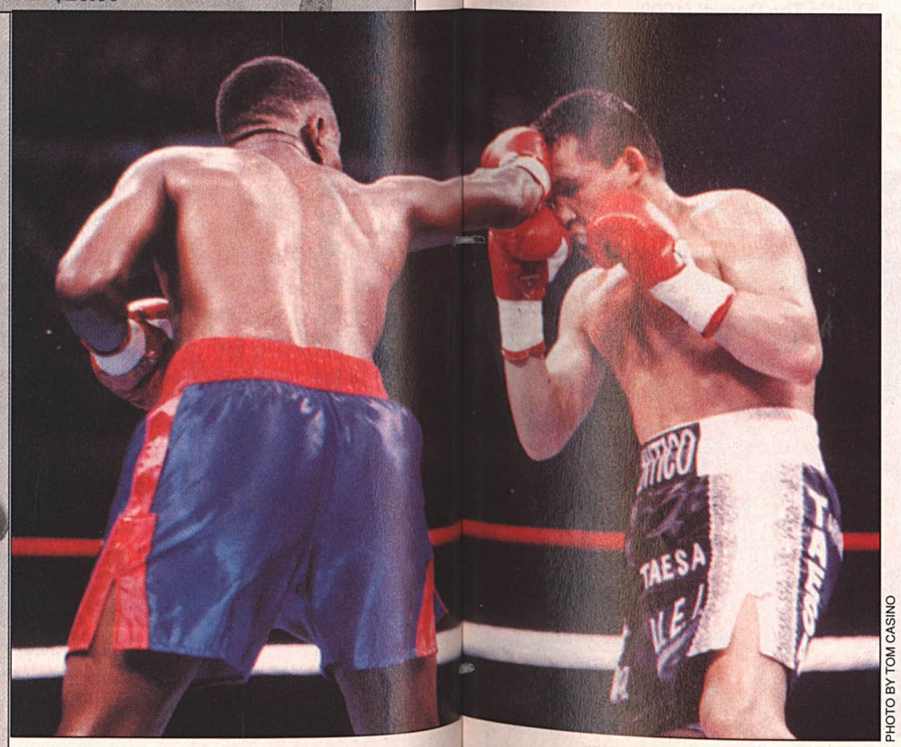
It's surprising how few fight names are reused. A title can't be copyrighted (you could name a boxing match "The Great Gatsby"), but commercial trademarks can be protected, so Taffet says HBO lawyers do legal title searches to clear fight names before use.

"We had to buy the rights to 'Danger Zone,'" he admitted. "There's a man who's a former champion of UFC, Dan 'The Beast' Severn, who owned the name 'Danger Zone' for a business he has training policemen in self-defense





Copycats: The first Frazier-Ali fight, Hager-Hearns, and Whitaker-Chavez fight were all dubbed "The Fight."



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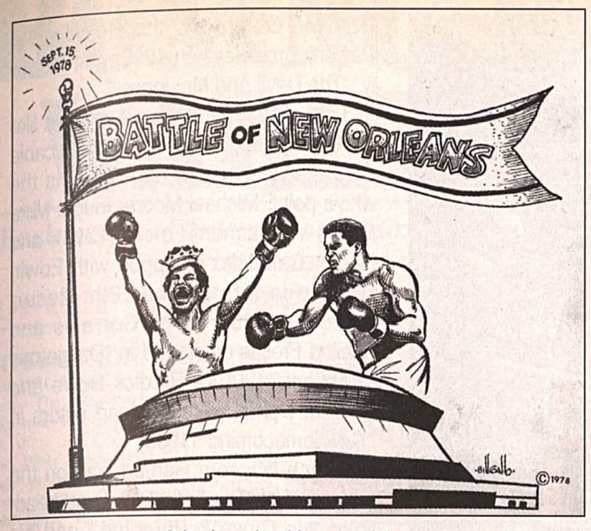


Calling the heavyweight championship rematch between Leon Spinks and Ali the "Battle Of New Orleans" was pretty much a no-brainer, as the fight was held in the "Crescent City."

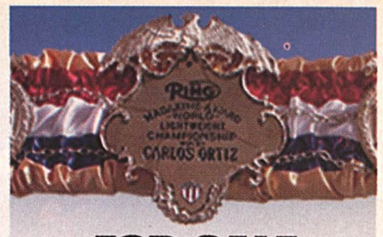
and martial arts. I remember I was with my mother and father, looking at a retirement community, and I was on the phone with Dan 'The Beast' Severn negotiating for the use of 'Danger Zone.'"

Still, repeats slip through. "Put Up Or Shut Up" has been put up twice (Camacho-Pazienza, 1990, and Brinkley-Spina, 2006). "Judgment Day" is used periodically to set up a fight in which someone is about to be tested, such as Berbick-Tyson, Calzaghe-Lacy, Benn-Eubank, and Douglas-Holyfield (full name: "Judgment Day Is Coming"). The first fight between Julio Cesar Chavez and Meldrick Taylor, in 1990, was "Thunder Meets Lightning." In 2005, the Arturo Gatti-Floyd Mayweather fight was "Thunder And Lightning." Thunder (Chavez) pounded out a controversial last-minute TKO to win the first one, but Lightning (Mayweather) dominated the other.

Rematches have a nomenclature all their own. Chavez had a chance for "Ultimate Revenge" after his first fight with Oscar De La Hoya was the "Ultimate Challenge" (Chavez lost both). De La Hoya-Mosley II was supposed to be Oscar's "Redemption"—after their first bout, which De La Hoya lost, was supposed to have been somebody's "Destiny." Larry Holmes' 1986 rematch against Michael Spinks was "Vindication In Vegas" (he didn't get it). Holyfield's second try at beating Michael Moorer was "Return To Glory" (he did). A few rematches have been "Unfinished Business" (Chavez-Taylor II, Jones-Griffin II, and Holyfield-Lewis II, actually called "Unfinished Business ... Search for the Truth." And you can't beat "Revenge ... The Rematches" (Randall-Chavez II and others, 1994) for getting to the point.

What seems like a great name for a rematch, "Now It's Personal," wasn't for a real rematch at all. It was the first pro fight in 2003 between Antonio Tarver and Roy Jones, who had tangled as amateurs. Their rematch was "It's More Than Personal." Their third was "No Excuses."

By the time of a third fight in a trilogy, a legitimate storyline often has established itself naturally. Gatti's brawls with Micky Ward didn't have names until their third, "The Final Chapter," in 2003. One



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Hasim Rahman was supposed to be "America's Last Line Of Defense" before he crumbled at the hands of Oleg Maskaev, who is actually a naturalized citizen of the United States and no longer represents his Russian homeland.

of the most famous conclusions to a three-match series was "Uno Mas," after Roberto Duran had quit in his second fight with Sugar Ray Leonard, uttering the memorable words "*no mas*."

Other themes have been perennial fight name favorites. Some bouts apparently have been very unpredictable, like "The Toss Up" (Curry-McCrory, 1985) and "Even Money" (Nelson-Hernandez, 1997), and "Too Close To Call" (Barrera-Juarez II, 2006). There have been patriotic events, like Don King's "Liberty And Justice For All" (Hopkins-Hakkar, 2003) and "Fists & Fireworks" (Peter-Skyes, July 2005), and King's strangely chosen "Star Spangled Glory" (a 1993 card whose main draws, Lennox Lewis and Julio Cesar Chavez, weren't American). De La Hoya fought Miguel Gonzalez "For Pride And Country" in 1997, and, of course, Hasim Rahman was "America's Last Line Of Defense" when he lost his rematch against Oleg Maskaev in 2006.

Occasionally, promoters reach for a touch of class and refinement. Riddick Bowe met Jesse Ferguson in Washington in "The Heavyweight Debate" (1993). Michael Nunn made short work of Sumbu Kalambay in the "Premier Battle" (1989), and Tim Witherspoon lost a close decision to Larry Holmes in "The Crown Affair" (1983).

Sometimes a fight name tells you somebody is getting old. There was "The Battle Of The Ages" (Foreman-Holyfield) and "The Last Hurrah" (Ali-Holmes in 1980, not Ali's last fight), and "Fight To The Finish" (Bernard Hopkins' supposedly final fight, beating Tarver, in 2006).

Sometimes fight names tell you somebody's nickname, which is like a movie named after one of the actors. Leonard-Duran II was "Stone & Sugar" (1980). Duran put his Hands of Stone "Mano A Mano" (1994) against Pazienza, and Hasim Rahman was "Ready To Rock" (2001) in his first fight with Lennox Lewis. It was "Lights Out In Reno" (2005) when James Toney fought Dominic Guinn and the Roy Jones-Pazienza mismatch in 1995 was, cleverly, "The Devil And Mr. Jones."

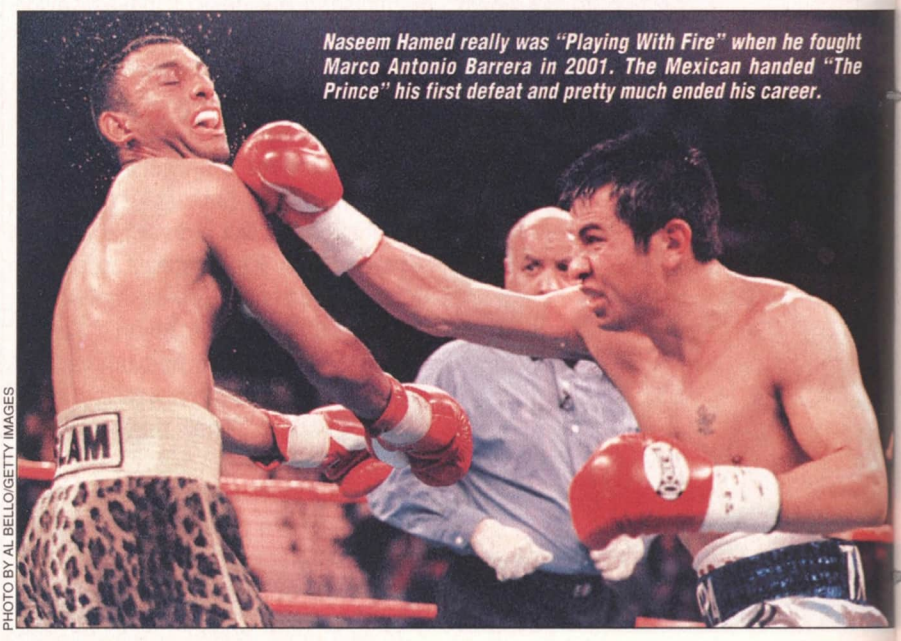
Lots of fight names have seemed like the titles of the movies showing on cable *after* the fight, which apparently is the whole point. Michael Moorer fought Mike Evans in "Magnum Force" (1993), and Hector Camacho scrapped with Edwin Rosario in "Friday The 13th: Resurrection" (1986). Diego Corrales and Acelino Freitas co-starred in "Dangerous Intentions" (2004). Riddick Bowe and Michael Dokes were the lead actors in "The Homecoming" (1993).

Prince Naseem Hamed was on the undercard of "The Full Monty" and headlined "Up Close & Personal," and his resume of truly embarrassing fight names also includes "Playing With Fire" (2001, vs. Barrera) and "Live & Unleashed" (1997, Cabrera).

Still, the boxer with the most unassailable record of fights that sound like B-movies has to be De La Hoya. Besides "Danger Zone," "Bad Blood," "Ultimate Revenge," and "For Pride And Country," he's been in "Undisputed" (2004, vs. Hopkins), "Title Wave" (1997, Rivera), "The Challenge" (1999, Quartey), and "The Quest" (2001, Castillejo). Heck, his second pro fight was on the undercard of "Duel In The Desert" (1992).

No wonder he's a matinee idol. ■

Don Steinberg covers boxing for The Philadelphia Inquirer.



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Naseem Hamed really was "Playing With Fire" when he fought Marco Antonio Barrera in 2001. The Mexican handed "The Prince" his first defeat and pretty much ended his career.

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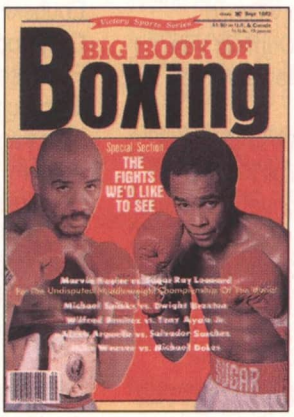

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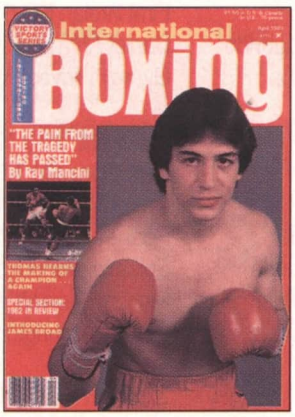

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[Summary]

Heavyweights

Wladimir Klitschko KO 7 Calvin Brock
(Retains IBF Title)
Shannon Briggs KO 12
Sergei Liakhovich
Evander Holyfield W 12 Fres Oquendo
Ruslan Chagaev W 12 John Ruiz
Alexander Dimitrenko W 12
Billy Zumbrun
Kali Meehan KO 3 Anton Nel
Sinan Sam W 12 Bob Mirovic
David Tua KO 7 Maurice Wheeler
Oleg Platov W 12 Henry Akinwande
Derrick Rossy W 10 Shannon Miller
Michael Sprott W 12 Rene Dettweiler
Albert Sosnowski W 12
Lawrence Tauasa
Timo Hoffmann W 10 Cengiz Koc
Paolo Vidoz W 8 Alexei Osokin
Travis Walker W 8 Jason Estrada
Chris Arreola KO 7 Damian Wills
Roman Greenberg KO 6 Alexei Varakin
Sebastian Ceballos KO 2 Lisandro Diaz
Alexander Dimitrenko KO 1
Gonzalo Basile

Cruiserweights

Rene Huebner W 12 Marco Heinichen
Rico Hoye KO 10 Sam Hill
David Haye KO 9 Giacobbe Fragomeni
Firat Arslan KO 5 Grigory Drozd
Daniel Ammann W 10 Dominic Vea
Gyorgy Hidvegi KO 6 Danie Venter

Light Heavyweights

Julio Gonzalez KO 3 Vitali Kopitko
Jason McKay W 10 Michael Monaghan
Rodney Toney W 10 Anthony Russell
Epifanio Mendoza KO 2 Anuar Sanabria
Richard Stewart W 8 Ronald Boddie
Jaidon Codrington KO 2 Johnny Brooks

Super Middleweights

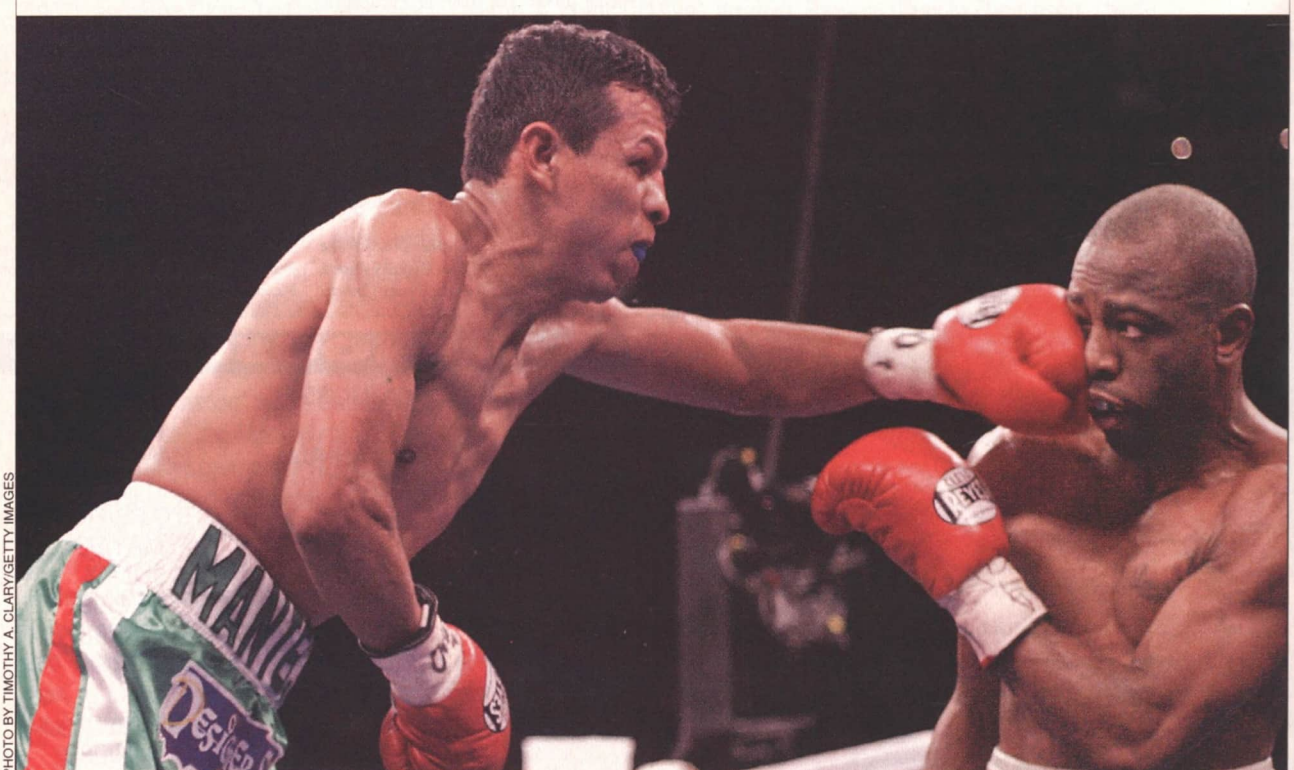
Anthony Mundine KO 4 Ruben Acosta
Rashid Matumla W 10 Maneno Oswald
Curtis Stevens W 8 Marcos Primera
Juergen Braehmer KO 8 Francisco Mora
Yoshihiro Araki KO 4
Prasanchai Looknongyangtoy
Anthony Dirrell KO 4 James North
Andre Dirrell KO 2 James Sundin
Peter Kazzi KO 2 Anont Donpradith
Laila Ali KO 4 Shelley Burton

Middleweights

Ebubekir Bulut W 10 Isidore Janvier
Gary Lockett W 10 Ayittey Powers
Eromosele Albert W 10 Nurhan Suleym
Sam Soliman W 10 Enrique Ornelas
Matt Vanda W 10 Dillon Carew
Anthony Bonsante KO 8 Troy Lowry
Domenico Spada KO 7 François Bastient
Andre Ward W 6 Derrick Findley
Kelly Pavlik KO 4 Lenord Pierre
Paul Smith KO 4 Ryan Walls
Joe Greene KO 5 Edson Aguirre

Junior Middleweights

Bradley Pryce W 12 Andrew Facey
Alexander Polizzi W 10
Kenneth Van Eesvelde
Javier Mamani KO 10 Crazy Kim
Joachim Alcine W Disq. 10 Jose Gomez
Harry Yorgey D 10 Martinus Clay
Jose Luis Cruz W 8
Archak TerMeliksetian



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Junior lightweight Manuel Medina snaps a left into Kevin Kelley

Marco Schulze KO 3
Ramadhan Miyeyusho
Donovan George KO 5 Julio Jean
Christophe Canclaux KO 5
Laszlo Buranyi

Welterweights

Floyd Mayweather W 12 Carlos Baldomir
(Wins World Championship)
Kermit Cintron KO 5 Mark Suarez
(Wins IBF Title)
Joel Julio W 12 Cosme Rivera
Eddie Delic W 10 Paul Tapley
Rafal Jackiewicz W 12 Nicolas Guisset
Golden Johnson KO 11 Oscar Diaz
Michael Stewart W 8 Roberto Valenzuela
Paul Williams KO 6 Santos Pakau
Luis Collazo KO 6 Artur Atadzhanov
Luis Uribe KO 1 Alfredo Velazquez
Vyacheslav Sheinrok W 6
Rastislav Kovac
Sebastian Lujan KO 9 Roberto Reuque
Said Ouali KO 9 Mario Ramos
Allen Conyers KO 1 Russell Jordan
Luis Abregu KO 5 Sergio Gaston Finetto
Charles Bellamy KO 1 Jomjoy Sithsaithon

Junior Welterweights

Kendall Holt W 12 Isaac Hlatshwayo
Herman Ngoudjo W 12
Donald Camarena
Ricardo Torres W 12 Mike Arnaoutis
Norio Kimura W 10 Koji Iida
Nigel Wright W 10 Gary Reid
Francisco Figueroa W 10 Joey Rios
Alfredo Di Feto KO 4 Mircea Lurci
Edgar Santana KO 3 Meacher Major
Rene Gonzalez Tech. Win 6
Carlos Mairena

Lightweights

Juan Diaz W 12 Fernando Angulo
(Retains WBA Title)
Hector Velazquez W Disq. 11
Bobby Pacquiao
Yuri Romanov KO 3 Juan Carlos Diaz
Ray Narh KO 8 Ramazan Palyani
Verquan Kimbrough W 8 Bernard Harris
Takashi Miura W 8 Denlangoo Tiebkoon
Vicente Escobedo KO 5
Ramon Guevara
Jesus Gonzalez KO 3 Hector Rodriguez
Dennis Laurente W 12
Somchai Nakbalee
Graham Earl W 12 Angel Hugo Ramirez
Willie Limond W 12 Kpakpo Allotey
Irvin Buhlalu W 12 Benedict Dlamini
Wilson Masamba W 10 Nginjale Chitenje
Nico Salzmann W 8 Muzaffer Tosun
Cristian Arrazola D 10 Jesus Lopez
Steven Bell KO 5 Steve Gethin

Junior Lightweights

Manny Pacquiao KO 3 Erik Morales
Malcolm Klassen W 12 Gairy St. Clair
(Wins IBF Title)
Manuel Medina W 12 Kevin Kelley
Monty Meza Clay KO 9 Fred Neal
Alex Arthur KO 5 Sergio Palomo
Marcelo Carrasco W 10 Claudio Aguilar
Yodsanan Nanthachai KO 4
Sataporn Singwangcha
Kevin Mitchell W 12 George Ashie
Jaider Parra KO 2 Johnny Lugo
Michael Lozada KO 1 Sergio Mondragon
Ahmed Elomar Tech. Draw 2
Pedro Malco
Nobuhito Honmo Tech. Win 9
Junji Murakami
Mauricio Munoz KO 2 Lucas Vargas

Featherweights

Orlando Salido W 12 Robert Guerrero*
Martin Honorio W 12 Rogers Mtagwa
Daniel Maldonado W 12 Jose Alberto
Gonzalez Manabu Fukushima W 10
Daniel Mansing
Yusuke Kobori Tech. Win 10 Akio Mikami
Marvin Quintero KO 3 Antonio Valencia

Junior Featherweight

Steve Molitor KO 5 Michael Hunter
Bernard Dunne W 12 Esham Pickering
Oscar Chauke W 12 Takatso Hlahane
Malcolm Tunacao W 10 Masahito Igawa
Mike Oliver W 12 Adam Carrera
Oscar Chacin D 10 Felix Bracho
Yujiro Sugita W 8 Ryutaro Kimura
Orlando Cruz KO 9 Juan Ramon Cruz
Napapol Kiatisakchokchai KO 5
Dondon Lapuz
Ryusei Yoshida KO 2
Teerasak Eauchumpon
Mauricio Pastrana KO 1 Osvaldo Cedeno

Bantamweights

Hozumi Hasegawa W 12 Genaro Garcia
(Retains WBC Title)
Veeraphol Sahaprom KO 4
Maiko Yombayomba
Cecilio Santos W 12 Alex Baba
Lante Addy W 12 Galley Cudjoe
Terri Cruz W 10 Eun Kim
Hidenobu Honda W 10 War Bartiquil
Terri Lynn Cruz W 10 Eun Young Kim
Cruz Carbajal KO 5 Alberto Chuc
Guillermo Dejeas KO 10 Guido Antilef
Jose Nieves W 8 Alejandro Moreno
Kwang Hi Lee Tech. Draw 8
Takahiro Takeda
Kazuhiro Matsuda KO 2
Masayoshi Nishi
Diego Silva KO 2 Jose Ferreira
Jason Hayward KO 1 Stephen Rose

Junior Bantamweights

Cristian Mijares W 12 Reynaldo Lopez
Devid Lookmahanak W 12
Marvin Tampus
Roberto Vasquez W 10 Horlan Hamilton
Jose Navarro W 10 Gabriel Elizondo
Junichiro Sugita KO 1
Saifa Sithgokongkarngym
Santiago Acosta KO 6
Bernardo Albornoz
Masafumi Otake W 8 Yuzuru Namushin
Makoto Tanigawa W 8
Nopadetchlek Chuwatana

Flyweights

Pongsaklek Wonjongkam W 12
Monelisi Mhikiza Myekeni
(Retains WBC Title)
Desperard Yasu KO 3
Pupa Looknongyangtoy
Stefania Bianchini D 10 Zhang Xi Yan
Simona Galassi W 8 Svetla Taskova

Junior Flyweights

Omar Nino D 12 Brian Viloria
(Retains WBC Title)
Takashi Kunishige W 10 Ken Nakajima
Shigetaka Ikehara KO 2
Dechsuk Sithsaithong

Strawweights

Eagle Kyowa W 12 Lorenzo Trejo
(Retains WBC Title)
Omar Soto W 10 Yader Escobar
Katsunari Takayama Tech. Win 9
Carlos Melo
Eddy Castro D 10 Hector Elizabeth
Junichiro Kaneda KO 2
Sansaknoi Petchpayaknam
Nkosinathi Joyi KO 2 Armand de la Cruz

*Result pending a hearing on Salido's alleged steroid use

Shannon Briggs KO 12 Sergei Liakhovich

Phoenix, Arizona: If the length of this report on Briggs' stoppage of Liakhovich was determined based on fistic action, you would have been done reading it by now. For 11 rounds, this was as dull and dreadful as it gets.

The good news for Phoenix fight fans who showed up at Chase Field was that they might have witnessed the Knockout of the year. Sure, they had to sit through almost 12 rounds of main event boredom, but when the explosive finish came at an official time of 2:59 of the final frame, it helped erase some of the monotony that came before.

After wobbling Liakhovich with a thudding right in round one, Briggs lost his breath and any momentum, failing to follow up. Both fighters quickly regressed into freeze-frame mode. Over the next 10 rounds, nothing happened that was worth reporting. It was that bad.

But in the 12th round, with the judges having Liakhovich ahead by one, three, and three points, Briggs, 268, Brooklyn, New York, came up with a stirring sequence of big whaps in the final minute that decked a listless Liakhovich, 238, Scottsdale, Arizona, via Belarus, twice and rejuvenated Briggs' career. A huge right hand dropped Liakhovich with about 30 seconds left. He was out on his feet after that, and it didn't take more than a few glancing blows to make him collapse through the strands onto the apron, where he got his legs caught between a table and the ring. Referee Bobby Ferrara (USA) waved it over without completing the count.

At press time, Liakhovich's manager, Ivaylo Gotzev, planned to file a protest based on the assertion that the Belarusian was actually knocked out of the ring with one second left, and that the final bell should have rung with Liakhovich lying semi-conscious on the apron.

If paying customers didn't protest Liakhovich's lack of a promised effort with their own bombardment of garbage, Team Liakhovich should refrain from any protests of its own. Especially since the rule in effect was that a fighter couldn't be saved by the bell in any round, including the 12th.

A choked-up Briggs was overjoyed by the win, however he got it.

PHOTO BY TOM CASINO/SHOWTIME

Briggs slams a right into Liakhovich

"Now I can say I did something with my life," said Briggs, who took the linear title from George Foreman via controversial decision in 1997. "My mom died of an overdose on my birthday in '96. They had the stadium roof open tonight and she was looking down on me."

"I fought a stupid fight," admitted Liakhovich, 23-2 (14). "I wasn't surprised by his strength. I knew he was a very experienced fighter."

Despite a lack of action that drew serious booing until the final two frames, it was a significant victory for Briggs, 48-4-1 (42). The 34-year-old positioned himself for sizeable paydays that will only increase if he keeps winning. Say what you will about Briggs' showing, but he did put an end to a lot of hype regarding former Soviet bloc fighters monopolizing the four most recognized alphabet trinkets.

To his credit, Briggs seemed sincere when he vowed to go after other major heavyweights. That's probably because Briggs knows where the money is. And Briggs may carry as much power as any man ranked in the division. A confrontation with Samuel Peter could be this decade's version of Foreman vs. Ron Lyle—provided Briggs throws punches.

Meanwhile, Liakhovich, 30, pleaded his case for a rematch.

"No way," said Briggs. "He's the toughest of the Russians. Why would I want to go through this again?"

Except for the wild finish, many fans would undoubtedly ask themselves the same thing.

Television: **Showtime**
Promoter: **Don King Productions**
(11-4-06)
Phil Woolever

Juan Diaz W 12 Fernando Angulo

Phoenix, Arizona: Coming into the featured preliminary spot on the Briggs-Liakhovich undercard, Angulo's most noteworthy accomplishment seemed to be having survived as a child alone in the jungles of Venezuela. Now, after surprising most pundits by going 12 tough rounds with rising star Diaz, the engaging Angulo can rightfully claim to have hung in there tougher than many of the "Baby Bull's" previous opponents. Judging by the cheers from the Chase Field crowd, announced at what seemed an inflated 12,000 fans, both the winner and loser came out ahead.

This was Diaz' fifth defense of the WBA lightweight belt. Both men threw plenty of punches from the opening bell. Diaz, 134, Houston, Texas, charged out in typical fast-forward fashion, but the muscular Angulo, 134, with orange dyed hair, refused to be overwhelmed.

[The Ring Fighter of the Month]

Presented by EVERLAST

Shannon Briggs

Shannon Briggs was poised to go down in history as one of the all-time heavyweight underachievers. His prodigious talent had translated into only one major win in a 14-year career, that a highly unpopular decision over George Foreman, and through the first 11 rounds of his bout with Sergei Liakhovich in November, he was taking underachieving to another level.

But in the 12th and final round, Briggs finally ditched the "under" and just plain achieved. He hurt Liakhovich and, too exhausted to follow up immediately, waited for the perfect moment, then decked the WBO titleholder. Then he finished him off in dramatic fashion, with just one second remaining on the clock and Liakhovich on his way to retaining his title on points if he could finish on his feet.

Will this mark a turning point in Briggs' career, propelling him to continue to win the sort of fights he typically lost in the past? Or was it just a one-night—or one-round—aberration? Either way, for that one round, Briggs was a heavyweight to be feared, smacking around a guy some experts were calling the best in the division. For one round, Briggs put it all together and achieved redemption, an alphabet title, and Fighter of the Month status.

PHOTO BY TOM CASINO/SHOWTIME

PHOTO BY TOM CASINO/SHOWTIME

Diaz has Angulo reeling back on his heels

Angulo, 25, backpedaled and kept pace with Diaz in terms of landed leather, but Diaz' superior firepower built a steady lead on the scorecards. Whenever Diaz landed a stinging shot, and there were many, Angulo came back with inside combinations. Diaz blocked most of Angulo's big responses, but the underdog got through with enough to raise numerous welts on the favorite's face.

Diaz made Angulo stumble with a wide left hand in round four, but the Venezuelan did a commendable job of fighting back. Good exchanges at mid-ring from the fifth frame on pumped up the crowd.

Referee Raul Caiz Jr. (USA) took a point from Angulo in the sixth session for excessive holding, but further clinches were far outnumbered by resounding blows.

Angulo gave more ground during the second half of the fight as Diaz landed more and more to the body. By the end of the contest, Angulo, 18-4 (11), was starting to fade, with his right eye almost closed. Sensing a stoppage, the crowd began a series of chants for Diaz, but it was not to be. If the fight was scheduled for a longer duration, Diaz may have notched a knockout, but for 12 rounds, Angulo wasn't going anywhere.

Judges Gerald Maltz (USA) and Luis Pabon (Puerto Rico) agreed at 118-109, and Raul Caiz Sr. (USA) saw it 116-111, all for Diaz. THE RING had it 119-108.

"He could take a punch," said Diaz, 31-0 (15). "He showed me different looks that I had to figure out and kept holding, but I felt strong. To be honest, I'm not even tired."

Diaz fought under the Don King banner for the first time, and is doing so on a bout-to-bout basis, with other major promotional players still trying to secure the 23-year-old's services.

Television: **Showtime**
(11-4-06)
Phil Woolever

Orlando Salido W 12
Robert Guerrero

Las Vegas, Nevada: Call it a tale of two disappointments. First, the highly touted Guerrero, who was making his first defense of the IBF featherweight belt at the Mandalay Bay Events Center on the Floyd Mayweather-Carlos Baldomir undercard and was hoping to impress the fans with a win over a seemingly safe challenger in Salido, fought 12 highly ineffective rounds and was dethroned via unanimous decision. Then Salido, who had just redeemed himself after passively losing to Juan Manuel Marquez in his first title opportunity two years earlier, tested positive for the steroid Nandrolone in his postfight urine sample, meaning the result will likely be changed to a no-contest sometime in early-2007.

Guerrero, 126, Gilroy, California, who is tall for the featherweight limit at 5'8", usually uses his height, reach, and awkward southpaw right jabs to pick off his opponents. But he gave up his advantages against Salido, 126, Ciudad Obregon, Mexico, and fought at close range throughout the fight.

Guerrero opened the fight by coming forward, giving the impression that he would get things over with quickly by landing hard right jabs off Salido's head. But Salido was fighting back and, in the second round, began to force Guerrero to trade. He landed solid right hands to Guerrero's head and from this point on continued to connect cleanly.

In rounds three and four, Salido landed right hands that rocked Guerrero's head back. The rounds were close, but Salido was impressing the judges by controlling the pace and taking the fight to Guerrero.

At the halfway point, Guerrero, 25, was trying to land right hooks over Salido's left jab, but dropped his own left hand in the process, allowing himself to get caught with overhand rights to his head. Salido was landing good hooks to the body, and Guerrero just couldn't get into a rhythm. But the titleholder stood his ground and remained competitive by landing lefts to his opponent's head. Referee Robert Byrd (USA) did a good job in allowing the boxers to fight cleanly even though the bout was fought mostly on the inside.

Salido, 25, landed a big right hand in the eighth—the best shot of the fight—and hurt Guerrero in the 10th round with another right hand to the head. He threw a flurry of shots to try to end the fight, but Guerrero fought back and stayed in there.

In the 11th, Guerrero started to use his reach advantage, picking and landing long shots, but by now it was too late to reap any benefit from this. By the end of the bout, Guerrero, 19-2-1 (12), looked tired, while Salido, 28-9-2 (18), was simply too strong and a little quicker than the prefight favorite.

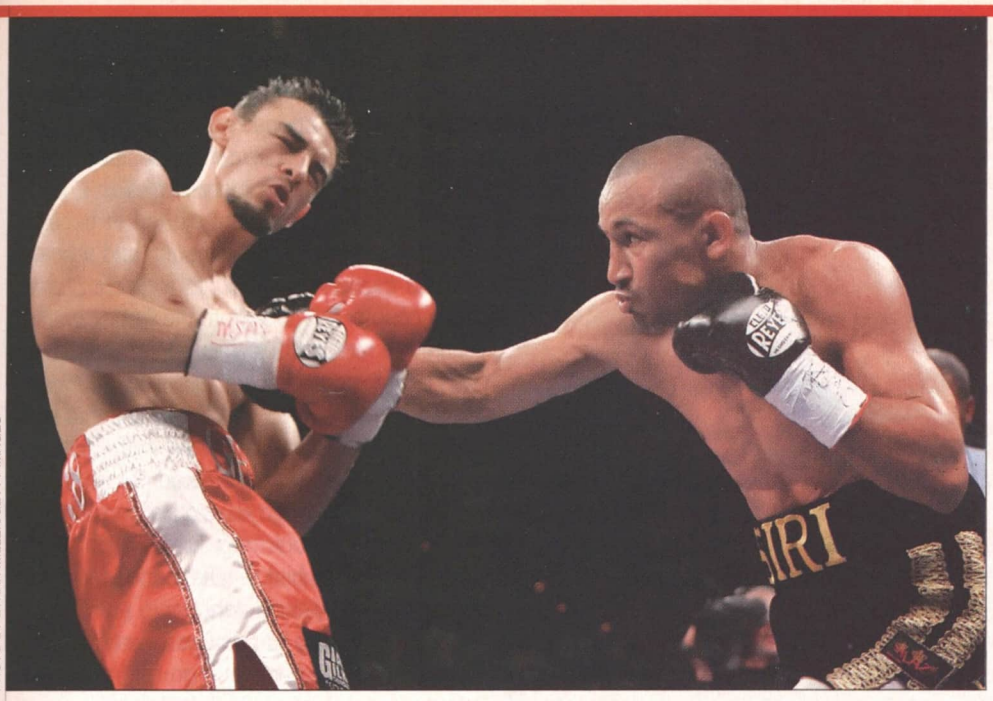

PHOTO BY ETHAN MILLER/GETTY IMAGES

Salido drives a right into Guerrero

What role illegal substances may have played in that remains unclear.

Salido won by unanimous decision on scores of 115-113 (Mark Green), 117-111 (Dave Moretti), and 118-110 (Patricia Morse Jarman). THE RING saw it 115-113 for Salido.

If the Nevada State Athletic Commission finds Salido guilty of using an illegal drug at an upcoming hearing, the result will become a no-contest, and Guerrero would be matched with another IBF-rated fighter for the vacant title.

Television: **HBO Pay-Per-View**
Promoter: **Goossen-Tutor Promotions**
(11-4-06)
Wayne McCullough

Chris Arreola KO 7
Damian Wills

Las Vegas, Nevada: Unbeaten heavyweight hopefuls Arreola and Wills fought on the Mayweather-Baldomir undercard at the Mandalay Bay Events Center, and the fans that arrived early were treated to what was probably the best bout of the evening when Arreola stopped Wills in the seventh round of their scheduled eight.

Arreola, 229, Riverside, California, and Wills, 250, Hollywood, California, both stand 6'4". They started the fight at a fast pace, trading shots, neither leaving room for error. Wills was working his left jab, helping to set up his overhand right. Arreola looked hurt when the right hand connected, and by the end of the first round he was cut over his right eye.

It was a disastrous start for Arreola, 25, but he regrouped in round two. They were both digging left hooks to the body, but Arreola caught Wills, 26, with a short left uppercut to the chin followed by two rights, and Wills stumbled backward. Arreola moved forward, trying to finish his opponent and landing left and right hooks continuously while the referee, Kenny Bayless (USA), stayed close. Wills, however, survived the round.

Wills got back into the fight over the next couple of rounds, landing solid double left hooks to Arreola's body and head. Arreola was content to sit on the ropes and beckon Wills in, taunting him to hit him again.

But Wills was beginning to visibly tire, and by the middle of the fight, Arreola was able to get his jab working well and began to beat his slower opponent to the jab for the first time in the bout.

Arreola, 18-0 (16), hurt Wills, 21-1-1 (15), on the inside with left uppercuts and right hands to the chin. Even though they were both fighting hard to save themselves from their first defeat, neither one had appreciably better skills than the other.

PHOTO BY ETHAN MILLER/GETTY IMAGES

Arreola's blistering attack stings Wills

A right hand to the head had Wills badly hurt at the beginning of the seventh round. Arreola stepped in and landed a flood of short rights and lefts, leaving the referee no choice but to stop the contest at 2:17 of the round.

In today's heavyweight division, one decent win can go a long way, and it wouldn't be a surprise to see Arreola fighting a legitimate contender, perhaps on a major network, soon.

Television: **HBO Pay-Per-View**
Promoter: **Goossen-Tutor Promotions**
(11-4-06)
Wayne McCullough

Kermit Cintron KO 5 Mark Suarez

West Palm Beach, Florida: Though the title at stake—the vacant IBF welter belt that Zab Judah notoriously retained after losing to Carlos Baldomir—was not going to make the winner a true champion, this fight at the Palm Beach Convention Center was still vitally important to both fighters' careers. For Suarez, a mystery man usually buried on Don King undercards, it was a chance to announce his arrival as a serious welterweight contender. And for Cintron, it was a chance to announce his full recovery from his devastating kayo loss to Antonio Margarito 18 months earlier. Consider the powerhitting Puerto Rican recovered, as he dominated the towering Suarez and stopped him in the fifth round, a performance ironically similar to the one Margarito had given in stopping Cintron in five.

A slugfest was expected, but Cintron, 146, Carolina, Puerto Rico, boxing with more discipline under trainer Emanuel Steward, tried his best to avoid that in the first round. The 27-year-old used his jab and crisp one-two combinations in the first round to establish control—but that only lasted until the 6'1" Suarez, 146, Riverside, California, turned it ugly toward the end of the round, sending Cintron to the canvas with two right hands behind the head in a clinch. Referee Frank Santore Jr. (USA) gave Suarez a vehement warning that he would subtract two points if "The Poison" committed that foul again.

Suarez, 27, started finding a home for legal punches in a back-and-forth second round. A right uppercut by Suarez made Cintron hold on, but Cintron soon came back with a left-right combo to the body. Suarez answered with a left to the ribs and then a right hand upstairs before Cintron responded with a right cross and a left hook. A hard right to the body by Suarez punctuated the round and probably gave the lesser-known fighter the slight edge.

The faster Cintron, however, opened round three with a big left-right combination and went on to carry the stanza. The action was fairly entertaining, though there was also a lot of clinching mixed in. In the fourth, the fight started to become one-sided. Suarez was bleeding from the mouth, and a heavy right hand from Cintron forced him to fall into a clinch. Suarez tried to answer, but a counter left hook from the Pennsylvania-based Puerto Rican froze him, and then an uppercut wobbled Suarez. Cintron was beginning to dish out a beating.

Cintron's right eye was puffing up, however, and that may have helped convince him to finish Suarez off in the fifth. An awesome hook-uppercut combination rocked Suarez, who showed a sturdy chin, refusing to go down. He could refuse no longer, though, when a left hook from Cintron sent blood flying from his mouth and forced him to take a knee. After the count, Cintron pounced with a vicious right hand, and Suarez almost went down again, leading to Santore nearly jumping in and stopping the fight. Instead, he let it go on for another moment until Cintron pinned Suarez, 25-3 (13), on the ropes and landed another huge right that snapped Suarez' head back. Santore had seen enough, waving the contest off at 2:31 of the fifth.

"I didn't win the first time I fought for a title," a jubilant Cintron, 27-1 (25), said afterward, "but I was getting it this time no matter what." Cintron expressed interest in a rematch with Margarito—but only after two more fights to get himself fully ready. There was talk as of press time of a possible Cintron-

PHOTO BY DUANE LONG

Cintron lunges at the retreating Suarez

Shane Mosley fight in February, which would be a heckuva way for Cintron to get himself ready for Margarito.

Television: **Maxboxing Pay-Per-View**
Promoter: **Bobby Bostick Promotions**
(10-28-06)

Daniel Ponce De Leon KO 8 Al Seeger

El Paso, Texas: WBO super bantamweight titlist Ponce De Leon moved into main event status of an HBO Pay-Per-View card televised from the Don Haskins Center when featherweight beltholder Juan Manuel Marquez lost his opponent, Jimrex Jaca, due to visa problems. Though the number of viewers surely went down after Marquez' fight fell out, the amount of focus on Ponce De Leon went up and, defending his belt for the third time, the 26-year-old didn't disappoint. Ponce De Leon, 122, Chihuahua, Mexico, had the crowd of 6,000 screaming for him to finish off 26-year-old challenger Seeger, 122, Savannah, Georgia, who was trying, unsuccessfully, to turn the battle into a track meet. It took eight rounds, but eventually, Ponce DeLeon gave the fans what they wanted.

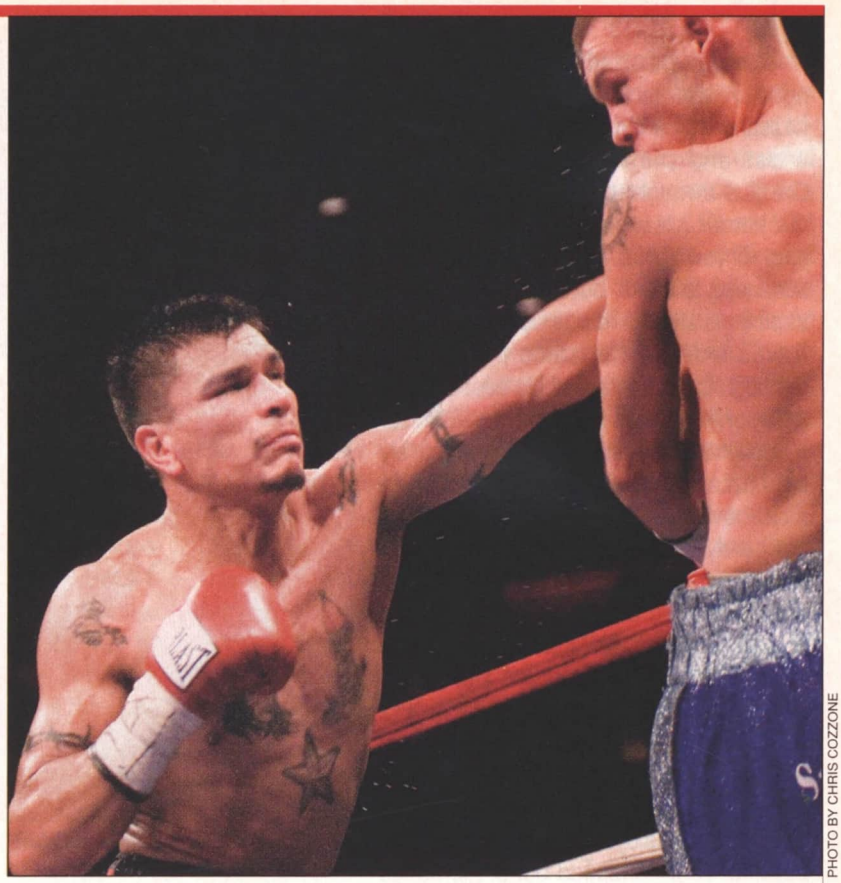

PHOTO BY CHRIS COZZONE

Ponce De Leon rips Seeger with a left

Proving that not all records are created equal, Seeger, coming into the fight a pretty 27-1 (22) thanks to a lot of hometown matchups, was stricken with rabbit fever as he hugged, danced, and just plain ran away from Ponce De Leon's unorthodox mugging, slugging attacks. At the sound of the bell, the Mexican threw himself at Seeger and started to bomb away with his drunken-sailor version of professional boxing. Not letting Seeger tie him up with his Velcro arms, Ponce De Leon pushed and shoved away, chopping him with short lefts and right hooks.

Seeger was not without an offensive plan—the problem was his plan didn't work well. His only success of the night, outside of tying up Ponce De Leon, was making the beltholder pay as he came in recklessly by scoring with an on-the-mark counter right hand. There were, however, only about two or three of those shots that landed within the first three rounds. Beyond that, it was tie up and run, while Ponce De Leon closed the gap and let loose with anything he could land—including a fair number of rabbit punches when held in clinches.

A straight left hand dropped the challenger in round four. Shaking his head at his corner that he was okay, the Georgian got up determined to at least survive.

Seeger's gas tank started to drain in the fifth, however, and he had less success keeping the stalking Ponce De Leon off of him. There was more clinching than running through the sixth and seventh, and despite his oftentimes dirty tactics, Ponce De Leon was landing cleaner and more often.

Referee Laurence Cole (USA) zapped Seeger a point for holding in the eighth. Getting back on his bicycle, Seeger tried to scurry away from his opponent, but was chopped down by another straight left. This time, Seeger's corner threw in the towel and the bout was stopped at the 1:43 mark.

Ponce De Leon, 30-1 (28), targeted Rafael Marquez and Israel Vasquez as future opponents, while ignoring the only man to beat him recently crowned the WBA 122-pound titlist, Celestino Caballero, who was trying to attract attention in the ring by calling out Ponce DeLeon for a rematch.

Promoter: **Golden Boy Promotions**
(10-21-06)
Chris Cozzone

Juan Lazcano W 10 Manuel Garnica

El Paso, Texas: In the co-feature of the HBO PPV card featuring Ponce De Leon-Seeger, former lightweight title challenger Lazcano, now campaigning at welterweight and junior welter, returned home for what looked to be a routine 10-round tune-up against the little-known Garnica. But based on the way his own hometown fans booed the decision in his favor, you could tell the fight turned out to be anything but routine for Lazcano.

Garnica, 143, Guadalajara, Mexico, who resumed his boxing career last year after a five-year layoff, shocked Lazcano by showing superior skills and doing enough to win the fight—albeit not on the scorecards, where it matters. When two of the three judges scored the bout in favor of Lazcano, 143¼, the approximately 6,000 fans in attendance were genuinely shocked.

Although outsized, Garnica, 32, went right to work in the first round, rocking Lazcano with a big left. Lazcano, 31, took it well and showed patience, stalking Garnica through the second, but eating the harder, cleaner shots from the slickster. Throwing lazy left hooks, Lazcano continued to press, but Garnica continued to pick his shots and outhustle the Texan. It was more of the same in the fifth, although Lazcano landed his best shot—a left hook—that was taken well by Garnica.

Still the aggressor, though ineffectively so, Lazcano continued to plod after Garnica, having a better round in the sixth, but nearly losing it at the end when Garnica had Lazcano going backward from a steady barrage of clean shots. The fight had all the appearance of an upset in the seventh and eighth rounds. A slow, uninspired Lazcano continued to be on the receiving end of the better punches while mostly keeping his own attacks holstered.

Then, in the ninth, after several desperate pep talks by trainer Freddie Roach, Lazcano finally snapped out of his trance and went to work. Garnica, 20-6 (11), taking a strategic page out of Oscar De La Hoya's playbook against Felix Trinidad, danced away, no doubt thinking he'd built up a comfortable lead. Fighting with a sense of desperation, Lazcano, 37-3-1 (27), took the fight to Garnica throughout the last two rounds, continuing to throw after the final bell had sounded.

It didn't look to be enough, but Jerry Wright (USA) scored it 98-92 for Lazcano, and Mark Ortega (USA) had it 97-93 for the local fighter. Levi Martinez (USA) made it a split decision by scoring 96-94 for Garnica. The crowd erupted with boos and chants of "Bulls___!" THE RING agreed with Martinez and the crowd, scoring 97-93 for Garnica.

Promoter: **Golden Boy Promotions**
(10-21-06)
Chris Cozzone

PHOTO BY CHRIS COZZONE
Lazcano rakes Garnica with a right

Sergei Dzindziruk W 12
Alisultan Nadirbegov

Halle, Germany: The gulf in class was just too big as Dzindziruk, 153, Hamburg, Germany, via St. Nizhnegorsk, Ukraine, an accomplished and underrated boxer, easily outmaneuvered a brave Nadirbegov, 151¼, Rikvani, Russia, to retain the WBO junior middleweight title at the Brandberge Arena. It was his second defense of a title he took from Puerto Rico's Daniel Santos in an upset decision in December 2005.

The 30-year-old appears set on proving that he ought to be taken seriously in a division that includes such luminaries as Shane Mosley, Oscar De La Hoya, Vernon Forrest, and Ike Quartey. A tall southpaw, the 6'0" Ukrainian is an intelligent boxer, well-schooled in the Universum Gym in Hamburg under trainer Michael Timm. He is not the most devastating puncher, but the way that he neutralized Nadirbegov demonstrated a variety of skills and an utter conviction in his handiwork.

The Russian challenger posted an impressive win last May when he stopped Kuvanych Toygonbaev in 11 rounds in Moscow. The WBO deemed it to be the Asia-Pacific Fight of the Year, for what that's worth. Toygonbaev had never been stopped, so Nadirbegov's win over the Uzbek, in which he knocked him down twice and prevailed inside the distance, was an indicator of decent pedigree.

He simply did not possess the tools, however, to knock Dzindziruk out of his stride. The Ukrainian took command from the outside, boxing behind an assertive jab and putting together good combinations that gradually depleted his strong and committed Russian opponent. Dzindziruk proved he has a good chin against Santos, but it was Nadirbegov, 29, who had to show his powers of resistance in coming through a steady stream of precise punches that might have forced a stoppage in the late rounds had he not been so determined to last the course.

Dzindziruk, 33-0(21), dominated, overwhelming Nadirbegov with his speed, precision, and array of shots. Nadirbegov, 15-2 (6), continued to try to catch Dzindziruk with counters, but the Ukrainian was too clever to be suckered in, emphasizing his supremacy with a succession of well-executed combinations late in the bout.

Joachim Jacobsen (Germany) scored 120-108, Henk Adriaansen (Netherlands) 119-108, and Andre Van Grootenbruel (Belgium) 119-109, all for Dzindziruk. THE RING also scored 120-108 for the unbeaten Ukrainian.

Promoter: **Universum-Box Promotions**
(10-21-06)
Brian Doogan

Joel Julio W 12
Cosme Rivera

Miami, Florida: After suffering their first defeat, many prospects tend to ease their way back into action with an effortless win against a soft opponent. Highly touted 21-year-old Julio got neither a soft opponent nor an effortless win in his first fight following his June upset loss to Carlos Quintana, taking on sturdy veteran Rivera and having to gut out a tight one, including a nearly disastrous final round, to escape without his second mark in the "L" column.

The first half of the welterweight 12-rounder at Miccosukee Indian Gaming was a judge's nightmare, with nearly every round razor close one way or the other. For the most part, Julio, 147, Monteria, Colombia, was the more active fighter, and his jab was dictating the pace of the fight, but the 30-year-old Rivera, 146½, Culiacan, Mexico, was landing the majority of the clean powershots, particularly with his straight right and his right uppercut. One of those uppercuts bloodied Julio's nose in round two, though the younger fighter probably carried the stanza on the strength of his steady jab and bodywork. He also seemed to win the third—or at least create the impression he was winning it by moving forward throughout while Rivera gave ground—but the fourth appeared to be edged by Rivera. Scoring the fifth depended on whether you liked Julio's early productivity or Rivera's work in the latter half of the round, and the sixth was no easier to give to one man than the other. On THE RING's card, the fight was knotted at 57-57 after six rounds.

The favored Julio began to take control in the seventh, scoring well with a series of clean lefts and rights in the final 10 seconds of the round. The eighth was the Colombian's best round, as his jab was on target early and a short right hand hurt and nearly dropped Rivera shortly before the bell. Rivera, who unsuccessfully challenged Zab Judah for the welterweight championship in '05, was hurt again in the ninth, though the shots that hurt him weren't scoring blows; they were head clashes, two of them in the round's first minute, the second one opening a gash over "El Chino's" right eye.

The pace slowed and very little happened in the 10th, and in the 11th, Rivera seemed to notice that Julio was fading, so the veteran stepped up the pressure. He landed an outstanding left downstairs/right upstairs combination, and carried that momentum into the 12th, freezing Julio with a left hook and following with a beautiful combination. Rivera's right couldn't miss, and Julio's left eye was swelling up as a result. With a minute to go, Julio was in full retreat mode, but Rivera kept closing the distance and got into range to land two sizzling left uppercuts. Finally, with 20 seconds left in the fight, Julio made the mistake of pulling straight back to avoid a punch, and found himself off-balance as a right hand clipped him and sent him to the canvas. He easily beat American referee Jorge Alonso's count and there wasn't time for Rivera to do any further damage, but the 10-8 round on the scorecards had the potential to be damaging enough to swing the fight in his favor.

Al Wilensky (USA) did indeed see the fight for Rivera, 115-112. But he was overruled by John Rupert (USA) and Peter Trematerra (USA), who had it 115-112 and 114-113, respectively, in Julio's favor. THE RING scored the bout 114-114.

Some might view the loss as a moral victory for Rivera, 30-10-2 (22), who has at least earned himself another high-profile "opponent" gig with the effort. For Julio, 28-1 (24), it goes into the books as a win, but it showed that the young prospect still has a lot of work to do before he's ready for championship-level guys. His next task was to be an off-TV fight in December, most likely against a lower grade of opposition.

Television: **Telemundo**
Promoter: **All Star Boxing**
(10-27-06)

Kendall Holt W 12 Isaac Hlatshwayo

Atlantic City, New Jersey: Unbeaten through 26 fights and established as a legitimate top-10 lightweight contender, South Africa's Hlatshwayo decided that the time had come to move up in weight to 140 pounds. The worry typically in such situations is that opponents in the new weight division might be too big for the smaller fighter. Against once-beaten prospect Holt at Bally's Atlantic City, however, Hlatshwayo found something else to worry about: an opponent who was way too fast for him. Holt used his exceptional quickness to turn what looked like a pick-'em fight into a pick-him-apart fight, scoring three late knockdowns to secure a wide points win over 12 rounds and hand "The Angel" his first loss.

Hlatshwayo, 140, Malamulele, South Africa, did his best work in the first two rounds. He came forward constantly, jabbed well, and kept his hands moving, punctuating the second stanza with a nice three-punch combination followed by an effective straight right. Meanwhile, Holt, 140 (after initially coming in overweight at 140¾), Paterson, New Jersey, was backing up and trying to land quick counterpunches, allowing himself to be outhustled.

"Rated R" began to swing the fight in his favor in the third, landing nice left hands to the body and a counter shot that almost caused Hlatshwayo's left glove to touch the canvas. Though he was still backing up, Holt's clean punches were winning over the judges and making his opponent slightly tentative. A sweet counter right hand in the sixth really got Hlat-

shwayo's attention—as did a clash of heads that left the South African with a fairly sizable gash on his left eyebrow.

Holt, 25, was in total control by round seven, buzzing Hlatshwayo with a nifty right uppercut-left hook combination. The Angel had just about stopped jabbing, and when he did throw the lead left, Holt countered him with zipping rights, like the one that ended the eighth round.

The ninth was a disastrous round for the South African on a couple of fronts. Early in the round, he hurt Holt with a perfect right hand to the beltline, but referee Alan Huggins (USA) mistakenly ruled the punch low and gave Holt time to recover. Soon after, Holt hurt Hlatshwayo with a right-left-right combo, sending him stumbling forward partially through the ropes for the fight's first knockdown.

PHOTO BY ED MULHOLLAND

Holt cracks Hlatshwayo with a left

With three rounds still to go, Hlatshwayo's corner told him he needed a knockout, and the cocky Holt was growing sloppy enough that he was there to be caught—but Hlatshwayo, 28, just wasn't quick enough to catch him. Late in the 11th, a round Holt was practically giving away, Hlatshwayo got caught by a big left hook and was knocked down by a shoving right hand. It got even worse for The Angel in the 12th. Holt bounced off the ropes with a vicious left hook to the chin, flattening Hlatshwayo with 1:15 to go. He got up at the count of five, but barely had his legs under him. Still, Huggins allowed the fight to continue, and, though Holt rocked his opponent a few more times, Hlatshwayo, 25-1-1 (9), was permitted to survive to hear the final bell.

Judges John Riley (USA) and Paul Venti (USA) both scored it 119-106, and Pierre Benoist (USA) had it 116-109, all for the lightning-fast Holt, 21-1 (12), who now has to be considered a legitimate junior welterweight contender.

Television: **Showtime**
Promoters: **Duva Boxing, DiBella Entertainment**
(11-3-06)

Kelly Pavlik KO 4 Lenord Pierre

Youngstown, Ohio: The 4,416 enthusiastic hometown fans who showed up to support unbeaten middleweight prospect Pavlik at the Chevrolet Center got to see the fistic equivalent of what happens when, to use a venue-appropriate analogy, a Silverado collides head on with a Malibu. The limited, 5'8" Pierre was simply overmatched against the wickedly powerful, 6'3" Pavlik, and this was a demolition right from the opening bell.

Midway through the first round, Pavlik, 162½, buckled the knees of "Haitian Sensation" Pierre, 161, Catskill, New York, via Haiti, with a left hook. "The Ghost" followed up immediately, and a barrage of punches sent Pierre falling into the ropes for a knockdown. According to the punch counters, the 24-year-old Pavlik threw 119 punches in the opening round.

And more hurtful ones followed in the second. In particular, a right hand sent Pierre, 27, staggering into the ropes, though he remained on his feet this time. The third round featured more of the same. Pavlik hurt Pierre with a hard right hand and proceeded to batter him with both fists, but the brave Haitian stayed on his feet all the way.

The beating came to a close in the fourth, when a huge left hook put Pierre, 18-3 (13) with 1 no-contest, on the canvas again. Considering that the fight could easily have been stopped before the round even began, ref Randy Jarvis (USA) had no trouble deciding to wave it off at 0:46 of the round.

"He bent right into it," Pavlik, 29-0 (26), said of the final punch. "I started off with a fantastic pace. By the third round I settled down. I got that bounce back in my legs and had a little fun."

The next fight for Pavlik rates to be a little less fun and a little more serious, as he's expected to make his HBO debut at the Arrowhead Pond in Anaheim, California, on January 27. Though you never know for sure with HBO these days, presumably, the opponent will be more challenging than Pierre.

Television: **Vs.**
Promoter: **Top Rank**
(11-2-06) ■

(Continued from Page 28)

"Baby Face" is clearly off to a good start. He has power in both hands and a calm demeanor that belies his age. The way Garcia sees it, no opponent can present him with something that he has not seen in the ring before.

"It's amazing to have that many fights at 19, that's why Julio's so calm," said Luis DeCubas Sr., part of the team that runs DRL Promotions, which promotes Garcia and also includes Roberto Duran as a managing partner. "Julio's made that walk so many times that nothing fazes him. Julio is an old-time type of fighter. You had to have 30, 40 fights before the old-time fighters got a championship shot. I think Julio is about two or three fights away. I'll tell you, I have so much confidence in this kid and his punching power that if someone such as a Floyd Mayweather made a mistake with him, Mayweather would be done. A puncher like Julio, he can lose every round and come back and win with one punch. He has dynamite in both hands."

The base of that power could be the manual labor Garcia endured as a child. His father was a security guard and police officer, but each of the five children had to work to provide for the family.

"It was a rough life," Garcia said. "I'd basically work for tips."

But his labor was good enough to eventually help his parents buy a three-bedroom home, a mini-mansion by Ciudad Acuña's standards. So hard work is nothing new and it accompanies his desire to fight. Still, some would say that 41 pro fights are too much for someone 19.

"Not for me," Garcia said. "I've never really been in any wars. And I was never worried about getting burned out on boxing. I don't feel like I'll ever burn out. I don't do it for the money. I do it because I love the sport. I feel like I'll get burned out if I *don't* fight."

But his devotion to boxing has been tested. He's lost twice, both eight-round decisions. His first defeat, to Orlando Campos on November 29, 2002, was avenged. Baby Face needed just two rounds to stop Campos when they fought again on September 5, 2003.

The other defeat was a little more disheartening. Garcia was originally announced as the victor in his first fight in the United States, against Larry Gonzales on January 21, 2005, in Houston, Texas. It was a nice U.S. debut. Or so Garcia thought.

"I'm there in the locker room, and the state commission guys come down and tell me the judges added the scores wrong and Gonzales actually won the fight," Garcia recalled with some agitation. "I was devastated. Here was my first fight in America and this happens to me. All it really did was piss me off. But I never thought about quitting. Not once. If anything, it made me more intense."

He cried himself to sleep that night, but the next day he went back to the gym.

"That's what I like about Garcia, beyond the obvious fact that he has tremendous punching power in both hands, he's just very poised and relaxed for someone his age," said Eric Bottjer, DRL's matchmaker. "He doesn't go into the ring with the intention of knocking someone out within 40 seconds. He thinks. I can't make a prediction as to how much mileage Garcia has left, but look at a guy like Julio Cesar Chavez; he was at a peak for a decade. And remember, Chavez didn't lead the cleanest lifestyle either."

If Garcia ever needs motivation, he needs only to think of his lifestyle of 11 years ago. "I was raised to be a man early in life," he said. "I always wanted to fight and love to fight. It beats some of the things that I used to do. What I do remember is lifting those boxes of fruit. Fighting is a lot easier. But those are my roots and it pushes me harder." ■

PHOTO BY MARTY ROSENGARTEN

Garcia strafes Zepeda with a left hook

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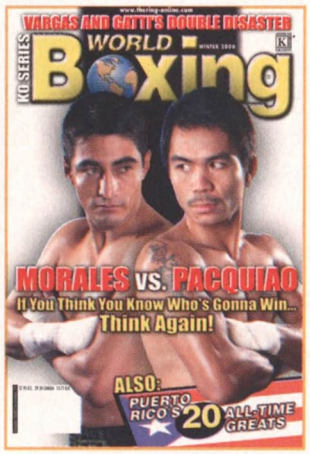

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❑ SEP/81	❑ JAN/86	❑ FEB/90	❑ OCT/94	❑ SUM/00
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❑ APR/84	❑ JAN/87	❑ OCT/91	❑ FEB/96	❑ OCT/03
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❑ DEC/84	❑ MAY/87	❑ JUN/92	❑ SPR/97	❑ DEC/04
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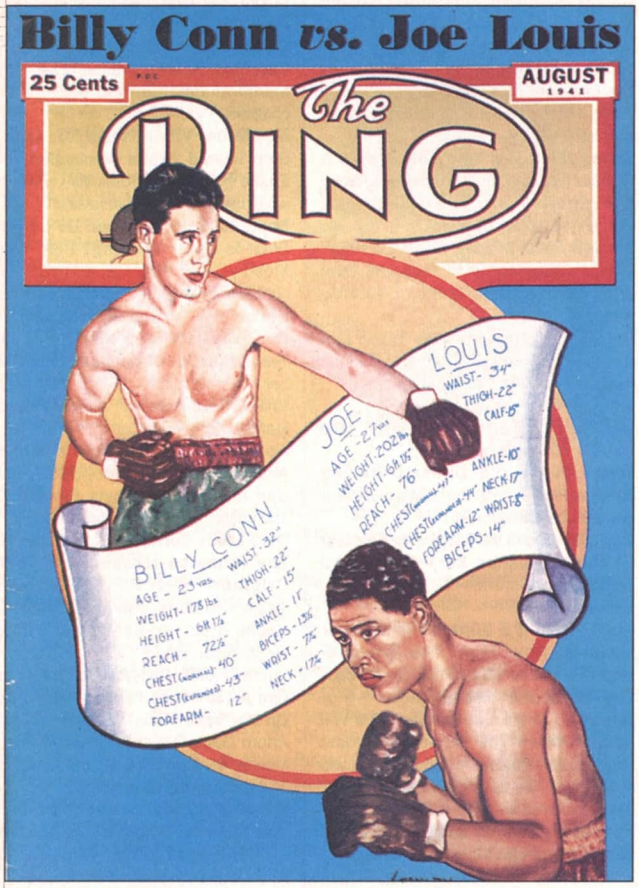


COVER STORY: "Billy Conn vs. Joe Louis" is the cover headline, but Nat Fleischer's article about the legendary encounter is titled "Cockiness Costly," which is much more indicative of what took place inside the ring. This was because every other aspect of the issue, including the cover, was shipped to the printer *prior* to the fight, while Fleischer's account was inserted immediately afterward, just before the presses rolled. That's the reason the cover featured such a generic headline. Moreover, as a footnote at the end of Fleischer's piece explained, there would be no photographs of the fight until the following issue. (Come on, Nat, you couldn't download a digital image or two?)

"The Bomber will never come closer to being toppled off his throne than in this fight," wrote Fleischer in his account of Louis' come-from-behind, 13th-round kayo victory. "Even Conn's most ardent supporters didn't expect him to put forth the brand of fighting he did. He outboxed and outslugged the most powerful hitter in recent years. He passed out of the picture as had been predicted, by mixing it with the most devastating hitter of his era, and he took the consequences."

"Terror Thrill For Joe" by Dick Cox covered Louis' title defense against Buddy Baer (Max's younger brother), which took place less than a month before the Conn fight, a schedule that would be unthinkable for a modern heavyweight champion.

In fact, Louis almost became an ex-champ in the opening round, when Baer clobbered him with a left hook that spun Louis around and sent him flying headfirst out of the ring. But Louis quickly scrambled back between the ropes and, according to Cox, "was punching back at the count of four!"

Louis never looked back after his near-disastrous opening round, and the courageous Baer took a savage beating thereafter. But the conclusion, which came in the sixth round, was not without controversy. After twice being floored by a "fusillade of paralyzing punches," the badly dazed Baer was dropped a third time by a crushing right. The problem was that the round-ending bell had sounded a few seconds earlier, but had gone unheard over the din created by the 23,912 at Washington, D.C.'s Griffith Stadium.

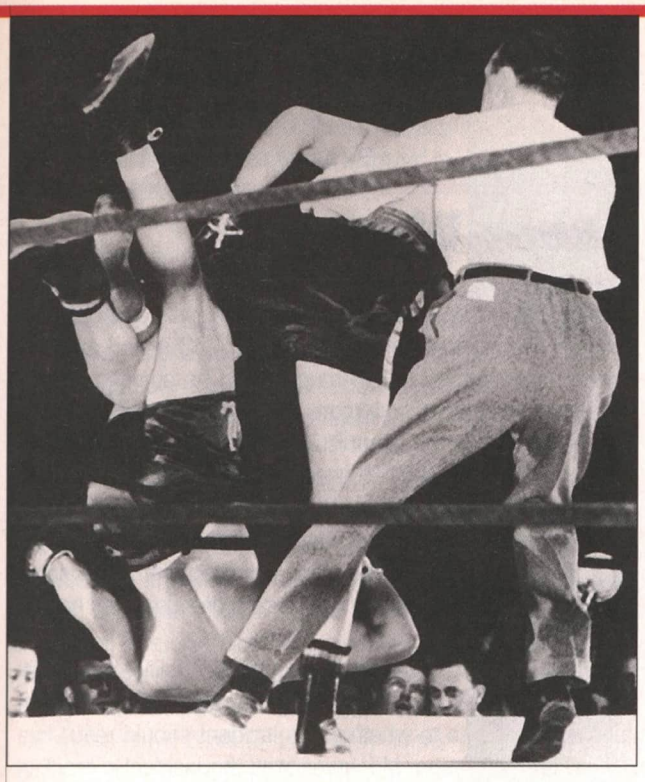
Baer's manager, Ancil Hoffman, tried to get Louis disqualified, but referee Author Donovan refused and ordered Baer to come out for the seventh round. When he didn't, it was Louis who won via disqualification. The hubbub was enough

World Champions

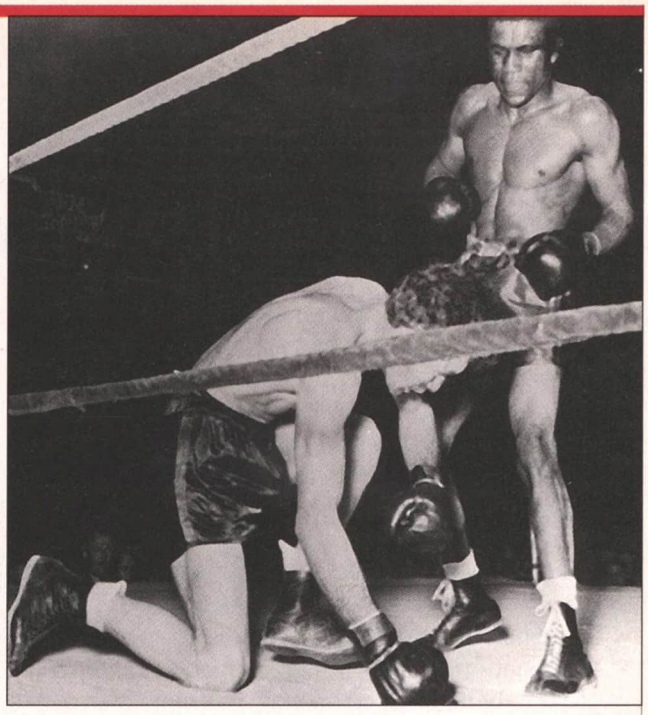
(for the period ended June 12, 1941)

Heavyweight: Joe Louis
Light Heavyweight: title vacant
Middleweight: title vacant
Welterweight: Fritzie Zivic
Lightweight: Lew Jenkins
Featherweight: Joey Archibald
Bantamweight: Lou Salica
Flyweight: title vacant

Conn struggles in vain to regain his feet



Louis falls headfirst out of the ring in Baer bout



Montgomery batters Jenkins to the floor

to earn Baer a rematch the following year, which resulted in a one-round kayo victory for Louis.

"Louis' Dude Ranch Shows Joe At His Best" by Hype Igoe was the third Louis feature in the issue and described the writer's visit to The Brown Bomber's 450-acre spread in Utica, Michigan, where "You'll find blooded, white-face cattle, prize hogs, game birds and chickens, trout in a stream that cuts through his grounds, and, best of all, high stepping saddle horses."

Igoe revealed that after purchasing the land for $35,000, Louis discovered an old couple living in a secluded cabin in a wooded area. The couple were worried they'd be evicted, but the champ reassured them that they could "stay there as long as you like."

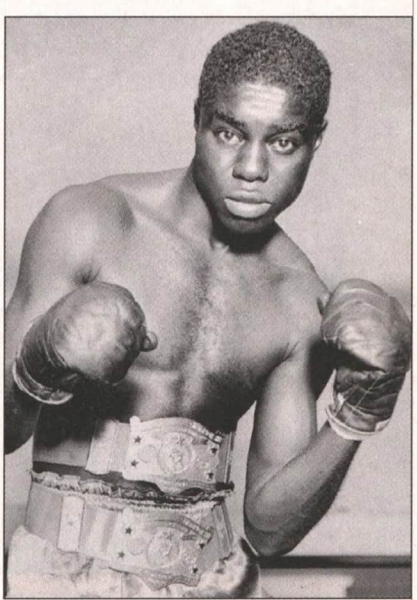
"Broadcast From New York" by Eddie Borden ripped the New York State Athletic Commission for allowing Lew Jenkins to tangle with Bob Montgomery, who won a one-sided, 10-round decision in front of 14,638 at Madison Square Garden.

"The cuts from his old wounds (suffered against Lou Ambers) were never properly healed and he was rushed into this contest because promoter Jacobs sensed a good crowd," wrote Borden. "The commission was negligent in not checking properly on Lew's condition."

"Boxers Aid Morale" by Arthur Thompson discussed various fighters serving in the Armed Forces. "Although Army and Navy officials are frowning on a general practice of releasing on furlough boxers who want to engage in professional bouts," wrote Thompson, "here and there exceptions are being made. It is entirely up to the commander whether such furloughs are granted, and in most cases, they are given only when officials feel that the appearances in a pro fight of boxers at their camp are beneficial to the service through the publicity obtained or because a portion of the receipts are given over to a welfare fund."

"In Sunny California" by local correspondent Harry E. Winkler featured a thrilling battle for the California welterweight title between Jackie Wilson and Baby Arizmendi that attracted 15,000 fans to Los Angeles' Wrigley Field. After surviving two first-round knockdowns, Wilson fought his way back and stopped Arizmendi in the eighth round.

"Arizmendi was never in danger of being knocked out and he would not give ground, even to Wilson's hot leather," wrote Winkler, "but the gallant Baby was merely playing the part of a target at the finish, his left eye completely closed and his face badly swollen."



■ *Wilson bested Arizmendi for California welter belt*

By Margaret Goodman, M.D.

Let's Stop Looking The Other Way

So much of what we do in boxing involves looking the other way. How often do commissions, promoters, and networks ignore that a fighter should not be competing and do nothing about it? How much longer are we going to neglect the problem surrounding weigh-ins? How much longer are we going to ignore performance-enhancing substance use in boxing? Why are we forgetting to consider what is in the best interest of the fighters and the sport?

Unfortunately, there exists a silent contract between each of the parties involved to turn a blind eye to problems that would interfere with a fight taking place.

Don't get me wrong. There are many caring people involved in boxing, but when push comes to shove, it is tough to go out on a limb and plead your position, especially if that position might interfere with business as usual. The saddest thing about pretended ignorance is that these problems don't go away. They just fester and magnify to everyone's detriment.

Consider the following instances of boxing's failure to do the right thing:

• What happened to former WBC heavyweight titleholder Oliver McCall in his February 7, 1997, Las Vegas, bout with Lennox Lewis is an example of how boxing has repeatedly let a fighter down. Most people recall how McCall had an emotional breakdown in the fifth round when he stopped fighting and began to cry. But how many are aware of the huge pressure brought upon the commission from the sanctioning organization and promoter to go ahead with the bout, even though McCall had just gotten out of drug rehab? Medical arguments proving that McCall was not ready to fight were ignored, but when he broke down in the middle of the fight, those same people who had ignored the warnings pretended they had no idea it would happen.

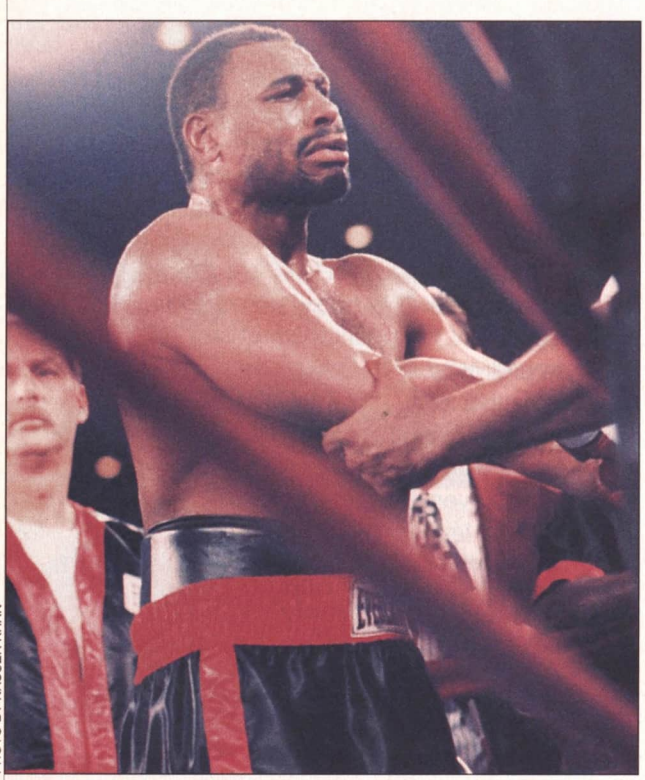


PHOTO BY NASSER KHAN

An emotionally distraught McCall should not have been allowed to fight so soon after drug rehab

• Following Mike Tyson's third-round disqualification for biting Evander Holyfield's ear during their June 1997 bout, questions abounded as to whether this incident should result in a lifetime ban for Tyson. Moreover, was the incident a result of pure rage, medication (or the lack there of), or a psychiatric condition that wasn't conducive with a boxing career?

Regrettably, most of those considerations were disregarded as the casinos, networks, and promoters lobbied for Tyson's re-instatement. Everyone, including labor unions that wanted a big-money weekend, pressured the Nevada State Athletic Commission.

Still, Tyson's boxing license couldn't be returned without having him jump through a modicum of hoops. There were several hearings, ending with a discussion of Tyson's inpatient evaluation at Massachusetts General Hospital. At that time, antidepressants were not approved, and besides, medications could take weeks to months to be effective. Several specialists traveled to Las Vegas and presented detailed reports that Tyson needed therapy, but no medication for his condition.

Did anyone honestly believe that Tyson would never have an additional issue? Of course not, but many jurisdictions lined up to re-license him while turning a blind eye to what was really in his and boxing's best interest.

Later, following a melee at the 2002 New York City press conference for the Lewis-Tyson match, Tyson wisely withdrew his license application in Nevada. Still, other states were anxious to grant Tyson a license.

"We have no reason not to license him here," Dickie Cole, boxing administrator for the Texas Department of Licensing and Regulation told the New York *Daily News*. "There's no way we could deny him a license here. We're not altar boys down here. We don't hold church in our boxing arenas. I'd love to see [the Tyson-Lewis match] happen in Texas."

• The brushing aside of serious problems in order to get a fighter into the ring did not end with McCall and Tyson. On October 18, 2006, John Rawling of *The Guardian* wrote,

"Scott Harrison's career is again hanging in the balance, as his manager, Barry Hughes, tries to secure the Scott's release from a Spanish jail after he was involved in an alleged assault of a police officer."

Harrison was training in Spain for a December 9 fight, and already on bail following several accusations stemming from an incident in a Glasgow pub. Harrison had postponed a previous bout due to alcoholism and now reports have surfaced that he suffers from obsessive-compulsive disorder (OCD).

OCD is a psychiatric condition resulting in anxiety due to persistent thoughts and impulses, and often occurs along with depression and poor social functioning. This is a disease that requires long-term treatment, and, like alcoholism, should not be used as an excuse, but rather as something that needs to be dealt with. Otherwise, it will continue to destroy someone's career and personal life. Bottom line: Treatments for these conditions take time and medication.

The regimen of a training camp and challenges of a fight should only be undertaken when a boxer is of sound mind and body. One without the other places a boxer at an unfair disadvantage.

PHOTO BY JONATHAN FERREY/GETTY IMAGES

Why was Corrales permitted to fight after admitting he'd starved himself in a failed attempt to make weight?

I applaud the British Boxing Board of Control for evaluating Harrison's situation before allowing him to fight. Medical tests, however, have limitations, and Harrison needs time away from training and boxing to deal with his problems.

• Drug testing is a constant problem for boxing. Many states do no testing and many others do it so randomly that offenders frequently escape detection. Those involved in boxing regulations are keenly aware of performance-enhancing drug use, but testing has not been increased and fighters often continue to have an unfair advantage over their opponents.

The most frequent excuses for the lack of adequate testing is that it's expensive for the promoters and too labor intensive for the commissions. The issue, therefore, is usually ignored to everyone's detriment.

• The timing of weigh-ins remains a serious problem. If you read accurate accounts of the recent Diego Corrales-Jose Luis Castillo and Corrales-Joel Casamayor fiascos, you have to wonder why the weigh-ins were even held at all, when it appeared that most of the involved parties knew at least one of the fighters was not going to make weight.

The Nevada commission's solution of large fines is obviously not a deterrent. Otherwise, Corrales, who had just canceled his previous fight due to Castillo's inability to make 135 pounds, would not have presented the exact same problem when he weighed in for the Casamayor fight. More importantly, how was Corrales medically cleared to fight when he admitted to having not eaten for several days and was still more than four pounds overweight?

The WBC and New Jersey commission have opted for serial weigh-ins, but that still doesn't fix the problem with fighters competing in inappropriate weight classes, and it doesn't prevent fighters from putting on large amounts of weight between the weigh-in and fight.

Furthermore, fighters are not supposed to have doctors waiting in their hotel rooms to administer large amounts of intravenous fluids after a weigh-in. Either medical exams are insufficient or we are once again turning a blind eye to a dangerous situation because of fear or ignorance.

The list of such situations is endless. The truth is that if regulators were to put the fighters first and act in their best interest, some fights would be canceled or not even made in the first place. Many might consider that reason enough to shirk responsibility in properly regulating the sport. But commissions losing sight of their role, becoming too fearful or friendly with promotional entities, or concentrating only on accruing tax money should not be tolerated. Determining fitness to box means just that. If you care about boxing and the fighters, boxing legitimacy can only improve if we face the truth—even if it hurts. ■

Come Out Writing

Letters may be edited for reasons of space and clarity. Send your comments to Come Out Writing, THE RING, P.O. Box 1148, Fort Washington, PA 19034.

Or e-mail letters to comeoutwriting@yahoo.com. E-mailed letters will include the writer's e-mail address unless a city and state of origin is provided.

Image vs. Substance

I would first like to congratulate Floyd Mayweather for winning THE RING welterweight championship belt. He shut out Carlos Baldomir without Uncle Roger in his corner, and if he hadn't fought half of the fight with a broken right hand, he would have scored a kayo.

Secondly, I'd like to comment on the boxing media. Floyd is the best boxing has, but the boxing media refuses to embrace him. You should be busy promoting him instead of belittling his accomplishments. Moreover, when THE RING places Mayweather on the cover (THE RING EXTRA, December 2006) looking like a gangster and then criticizes him for having a negative image, it amazes me.

SEAN GOODMAN
Syracuse, NY

Editor's note: While THE RING was happy to accommodate him, it was Mayweather's idea to pose in a gangster outfit.

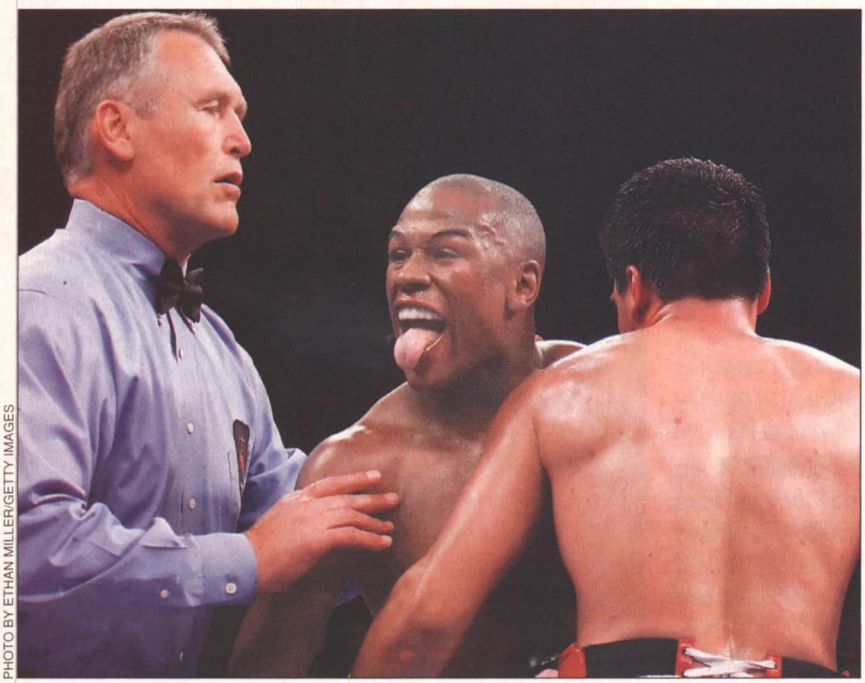


PHOTO BY ETHAN MILLER/GETTY IMAGES

Mayweather shows that his tongue is just as quick as his fists, as referee Jay Nady moves in to break a clinch during the Baldomir fight. Reader Sean Goodman thinks the media is unappreciative of "Pretty Boy."

Losing To The Best

It doesn't matter that Carlos Baldomir, in some fans' eyes, didn't win a round against Floyd Mayweather (I had him winning the 12th). Baldomir had one heck of a year. Nobody gave him a chance to win against Zab Judah, but he did. Most didn't pick him to beat Arturo Gatti either, but he knocked him out. Mayweather is the number-one fighter in the sport, and if you have to lose, it might as well be against the best. Regardless, Baldomir will never have to sell another feather duster.

JASON SHAHEEN
Flint, MI

Ryan Riles Razorback

Concerning the "Ryan Out Loud" column in the January 2007 issue of THE RING DOUBLE, I found Jeff Ryan's view of Jermain Taylor absolutely ridiculous. Ryan cites Taylor as one of the most annoying people in boxing because Taylor "has more close escapes than David Blaine." Forgive Taylor for having close calls with the pound-for-pound number-one rated Bernard Hopkins and number-two rated Winky Wright. Instead of irritation, maybe Ryan should admire a boxer who fights Hopkins and Wright back-to-back.

JEFF CHAPMAN
Kenwood, AR

Where Are The Women?

Despite the fact that the better-known female boxers, like Laila Ali and Lucia Rijker, haven't had much activity recently, there is a whole world of professional female boxers who have matches all the time. I read your magazine monthly, and often bring it into the gym where I train for others to read. The guys can always find inspiration in the pages by learning about the male stars of the sport, but the teenaged girls and adult females can't do the same. I know

there is a bias against female fighters, but come on. We exist, and we're not going anywhere. THE RING is "The Bible Of Boxing," so why not cover the women's bouts too?

HILLARI HUNTER
Chicago, IL

Separate But Equal

I am an avid boxing fan and loyal reader of your magazine, but enough is enough. I am sick and tired of reading potshot after potshot at the UFC and its fighters in your pages. In the January 2007 issue of THE RING DOUBLE, you published a letter from Vinnie Bowers ("Come Out Writing") about how UFC fighters are inherently inferior to boxers and how Mike Tyson would destroy any of them with a single left hook. This is simply absurd, meaningless drivel that reeks of insecurity. The fighters who fight for the UFC (and other MMA promotions) are talented, dedicated athletes who deserve better than the shabby treatment you see fit to give them.

No boxer could compete with a top UFC fighter in the cage, just as no UFC fighter could compete with a top boxer in a boxing ring. Can fans of boxing and the UFC not simply accept that they are two different sports, each with something to offer?

MATTHEW RANDO-CHANON
mrandoc@yahoo.com

Contender Kudos

The wonderful and moving cover of the January 2007 issue of THE RING DOUBLE provides clear and incontestable evidence of the positive aspects of *The Contender*: the respect for excellence, for genuine achievement, and for courageous effort that each boxer gave. The contestants show enthusiastic admiration for past and present champions. And past greats such as Ray Leonard, as your cover demonstrates, return this admiration to the next generation of boxers such as Grady Brewer, the newest and most surprising victorious "contender." These qualities are seldom found in contemporary society. Those who seek role models should look neither to politicians nor to celebrities, but to these splendid young men who practice the sport we love.

BERNARD FREYDBERG
Slippery Rock, PA

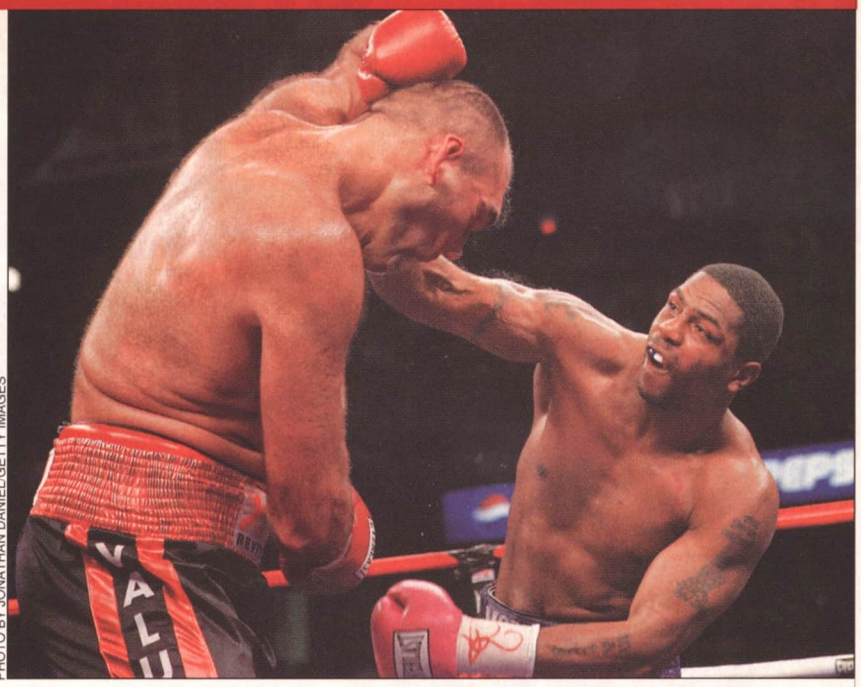


PHOTO BY JONATHAN DANIEL/GETTY IMAGES

Nikolay Valuev absorbed this flush right hand from Monte Barrett and kept chugging forward. Readers Manuel D. Rosales and Grover Hill wrote to express opposite opinions on the gigantic Russian heavyweight.

Valuev: Pro & Con

Nicolay Valuev did not show any amazing boxing skills against Monte Barrett, but his size, stamina, and record make him an entertainment asset in the heavyweight division. I would definitely pay to see him get tested by any of the top heavyweights, and I can't say the same for the last heavyweight PPV. Styles make fights, and who knows how Valuev would react against someone faster and taller than Barrett. I would definitely pay so see an all-Soviet match between Valuev and Oleg Maskaev.

MANUEL D. ROSALES
San Antonio, TX

Recently, my wife and I watched Monte Barrett fight Nikolay Valuev. Valuev belongs in the circus maybe, but not in the boxing ring. Barrett staggered him in the first round, and if he would have settled down and stuck to bodypunching, he could have pulled off an upset. Valuev's size is his only asset. He can't fight. At 350 pounds, he should be knocking down trees. When he does meet a real top-notch heavyweight, he'll be hurt.

GROVER HILL
Brooklyn, NY

Average Joe

I knew it would happen: Joe Calzaghe finally gets the credit he deserves due to comprehensively defeating would-be star Jeff Lacy, and then goes and undoes all the good work by looking distinctively average in his very next outing. With a documentary TV show made in his honor, large amounts of ink devoted to him in British newspapers, and even American coverage by HBO, Calzaghe almost blew it in his fight with the unheralded challenger Sakio Bika.

All the newfound attention he was the subject of may have actually been a factor in Joe's less than stellar performance. If he was not trying to impress the expectant U.S. audience with his dropped hands and showboating, then who else was he doing it for? Calzaghe let his new star status go to his head, if you ask me. He got the win and retained both THE RING belt and his unbeaten record, but I would now make a prospective match between Calzaghe and Mikkel Kessler a pick-'em fight.

JAMES SLATER
York, England ■

By Joe Santoliquito

Manfredo Is Now A Bonafide "Contender"

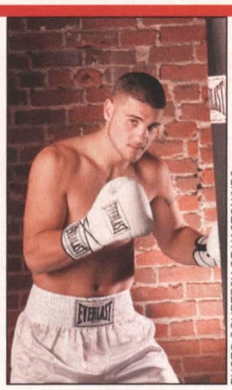


PHOTO COURTESY OF HASTON/NBC

Manfredo has outdistanced the first Contender class

Peter Manfredo didn't exactly get his wish—a fight with **Roy Jones**—after beating up **Joe Spina** to become the boxing king of Providence, Rhode Island. But the super middleweight, best known as the Season One runner-up on the boxing reality show *The Contender*, came away with a pretty neat consolation prize: a ticket to England and a career-high payday to face super middleweight world champion **Joe Calzaghe**.

Manfredo, 26-3 (12), rated 10th at 168 by THE RING, will meet the undefeated Calzaghe, 42-0 (31), on March 3 in the champion's backyard in Cardiff, Wales. HBO's *Championship Boxing* will broadcast the fight.

After devouring Spina in three rounds last October, fighting for a world title on HBO is beyond what Manfredo ever anticipated.

Who needs Roy Jones?

"I don't think there's any question, I got a better fight than Roy Jones," Manfredo said. "I'm fighting for the world championship. I'm fighting Calzaghe in his hometown. This will be his 20th title defense and he's undefeated. That's a big deal.

"I know I'll have to travel to England, which will be my first time over there. But I'm not afraid. Actually, I'm extremely confident. I'm hungry right now and I'm determined. I have Freddie Roach, who is the best trainer in the world, in my corner, and I feel comfortable at 168."

Manfredo, who said he would receive a $500,000 purse for the fight, is putting considerable distance between himself and *Contender* rival **Sergio Mora**, who fought two nondescript opponents in 2006.

"The way boxers make money is through being known," said Manfredo. "You get known as a boxer with the Olympics, but I fought locally and who knows where I would be now if not for *The Contender*. Once you're on TV, especially network TV, people get to know you."

Manfredo feels he knows Calzaghe well. He saw the southpaw tear apart **Jeff Lacy** last March, but Manfredo says he has a few tricks he plans on using, along with a sturdy chin.

"He's very difficult—a little awkward—but he's not going to knock me out," Manfredo vowed. "I don't think he's strong enough to knock me out. I'm either going to knock him out, or we'll go the distance, in which case I'll outlast him. Most of Calzaghe's knockouts came early in his career, while fighting strictly in the U.K. If he had fought over here, in the United States, things might be a little different. I don't know if he would still be undefeated. Competition here is much better than in England. But I do respect the guy; he is a world champion."

And Manfredo, who has fought most of his career in the New England area, says he has no problem fighting on Calzaghe's home turf.

"I wish the fight was over here in America, but Calzaghe is the world champion, so I have to go to him," Manfredo said. "Since I began boxing, I've wanted to be the best. I think I'm at my best right now."

We'll see on March 3 if Manfredo's best is good enough.

Listen Up

Jose Luis Castillo will return to the ring against undefeated **Herman Ngoudjo**, on January 20, at the Paris Hotel, in Las Vegas. The Castillo fight will be part of an HBO doubleheader featuring world junior welterweight champion **Ricky Hatton** against **Juan Urango** as the main event. The hope is to stimulate interest in a Hatton-Castillo showdown for later in '07. But first, Castillo, 54-7-1 (47), has to get by Ngoudjo, 15-0 (9), whose most significant victory was a 12-round unanimous decision over **Emanuel Augustus**, back in October '05. Five of Ngoudjo's last six victories went the distance. As for Castillo, he's trying to breathe life back into his career after the weigh-in debacle that cancelled his third fight against then-lightweight world champion **Diego Corrales**. Since then, Castillo has had one fight, scoring a mundane and rather easy 12-round decision over **Rolando Reyes**. Hatton, 41-0 (30), also has to do his part, and that's get by the unbeaten Urango, 17-0-1 (13). ■

PHOTO BY TOM CASINO/SHOWTIME

Castillo's last foray in the ring came against Reyes almost a year ago

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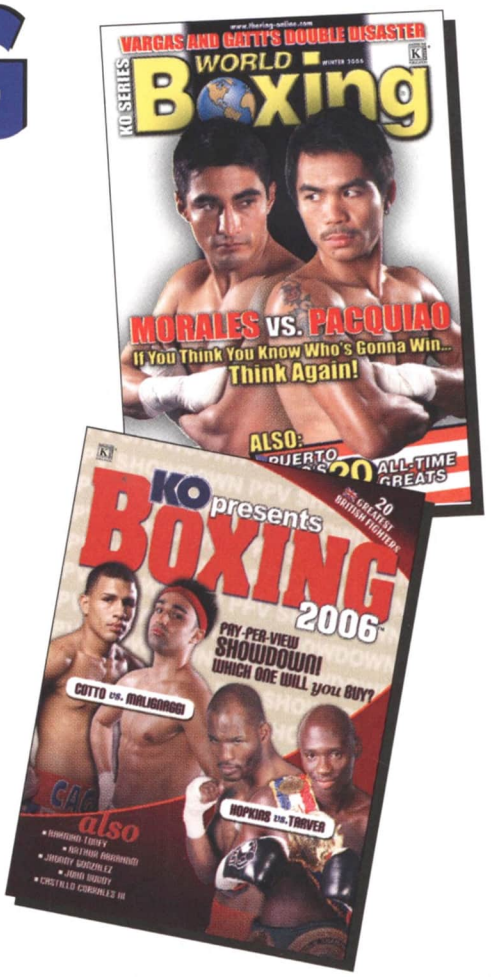

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